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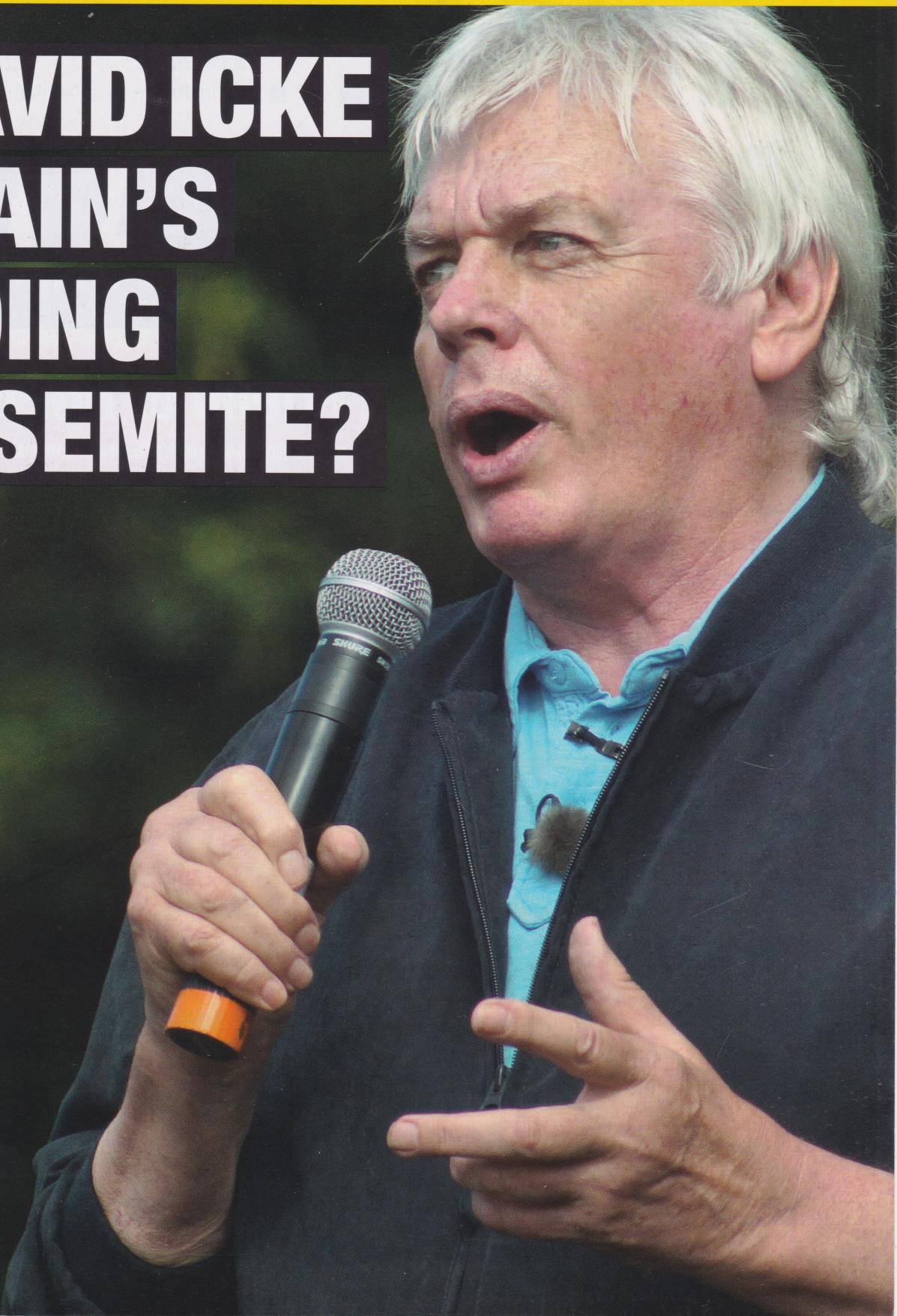
Providing a positive antidote  
to hate and intolerance

November-December 2017  
Issue no. 34 Price £3.50



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An anti-fascist and  
anti-racist publication

November-December 2017

Issue no. 34

ISSN 2049-7806

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Cover photo: Tyler Merbler

HOPE not hate is a bi-monthly publication providing information on hate groups and community initiatives to combat them.

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## **A year to remember**

2017 was definitely one of HOPE not Hate's most productive and successful years. We struck a blow against fake news by forcing Nigel Farage publicly to withdraw his highly damaging claim that HOPE not hate was a violent and undemocratic organisation while also promising never to repeat it.

We led an international campaign to stop far right activists disrupting and blocking NGO ships in the Mediterranean helping refugees making the perilous sea crossing and we forced the cancellation of an 8-day far right Rebel Media conference aboard a Norwegian Cruise Line ship.

An infiltration into the very heart of the white supremacist "Alt-Right" in the UK and the US became a 30-minute HOPE not hate film with additional money now being raised to turn it into an hour long documentary for broadcast in several European countries.

We produced groundbreaking reports on the Alt Right, the influence of the right-wing US-media outlet Breitbart on UKIP and Brexit and, towards the end of the year, we revealed how anti-Muslim activists were manipulating social media, including the use of "Bot armies", to amplify and spread their anti-Muslim agenda.

HOPE not hate produced in-depth reports from France and Germany ahead of their respective national elections and we also established HOPE not hate USA in order to help us better monitor and undermine the growing transatlantic far right links.

Over three million people watched a two-minute video we produced celebrating the contributions EU migrants make to the UK in just 72 hours. Over half a million people watched three short films we produced in the wake of the horrific

Islamist terrorist attacks in London and Manchester.

Towards the end of the year we assisted an ITV undercover operation inside Britain's far right.

Most importantly of all, HOPE not hate exposed a nazi plot to kill a Labour MP. Six supporters of National Action, the first nazi group to be banned as a terrorist organisation since World War Two, are now awaiting trial on terrorism charges.

### **CHALLENGES AHEAD**

While 2017 was a very successful year for HOPE not hate, we are under no illusion about the challenges ahead.

The far right might be weaker and more divided than at any time over the last 30 years but Britain is more divided and polarised and, while UKIP might have collapsed, the potential audience for a right-wing populist and nativist party is as strong as ever.

Our recent Fear & HOPE report revealed that 14% of the population most identified with Nigel Farage. While the terrorist attacks led to a powerful outpouring of community togetherness, a considerable minority (40%) had little time for this positivity. Across society as a whole, attitudes to Muslims and Islam have grown more negative.

### **CORROSIVE**

Much of this edition of HOPE not hate is taken up with right-wing conspiracy theorists and the deliberate manipulation of social media by anti-Muslim activists.

Truth is always relative in politics but the way conspiracy theorists warp public debate and their ability to amplify conspiracy and hate language on social media is corrosive to our politics and society generally. This is a topic we will continue to explore during 2018.

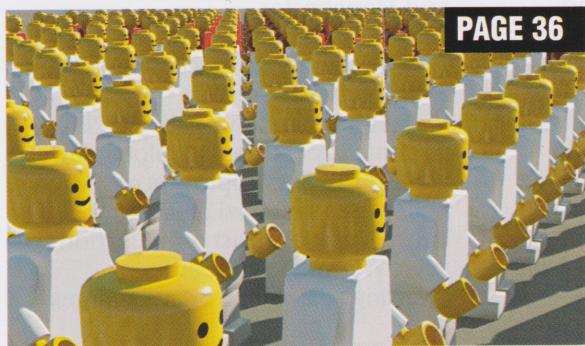
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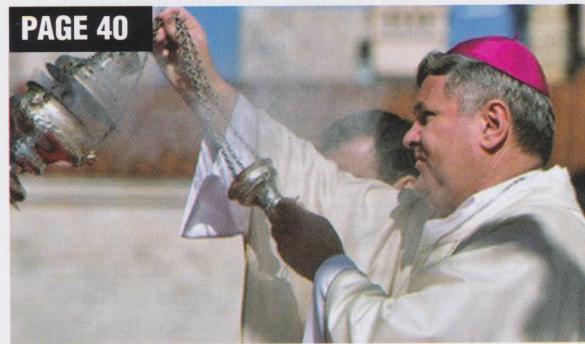
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**HNH uses research, education and public engagement to challenge mistrust and racism, and helps to build communities that are inclusive, celebrate shared identities and are resilient to hate.**

Initially established to counter the electoral rise of the BNP, HOPE not hate mobilises communities by providing a positive alternative to the politics of hate. HOPE not hate has over 214,000 online supporters and over 240,000 followers on Facebook. We are not aligned to any political party and will work with everyone wherever possible.

HOPE not hate comprises HOPE not hate Ltd and our charitable wing, HOPE not hate Charitable Trust.

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## Hope not hate joins coalition

NGOs MET in Brussels with a European Commission (EC) coordinator to discuss concerns and a united approach to tackling Islamophobia across Europe.

The 4<sup>th</sup> roundtable on anti-Muslim hatred and discrimination organised by the EC and chaired by David Friggieri, EU coordinator on combatting anti-Muslim hatred, took place on 8 December.

Hope not hate, along with civil society organisations such as the European Network Against Racism (ENAR), the Collective against Islamophobia in France (CCIF) and the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) discussed a wide range of concerns and evaluated the progress achieved with Friggieri.

Several NGOs stressed the increasing backlash Muslim communities face in Europe – detailed in reports such as the one published by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency – and the need to strengthen partnerships to combat Islamophobia across Europe.

While the NGOs present praised the EC for its efforts in increasing the visibility of Islamophobia, there was also a collective feeling that more concrete actions are needed in the fight against anti-Muslim hatred.

The EC appointed a coordinator on anti-Muslim hatred two years ago and some NGOs feel the issue of systematic forms of discrimination affecting Muslims is overshadowed by the also important issue of preventing radicalism and terrorism.

Julie Pascoët, a senior policy advisor for ENAR, said it was important that policy makers did not “fall into the trap of treating Muslims as potential problems instead of treating them as human beings whose fundamental rights can be violated”. She stresses this is “counterproductive and further fuels stigmatisation and generalisation about Muslims”.

HOPE not hate joined the other NGOs in sending the EC a list of concrete recommendations for action. These include publicly condemning Islamophobic comments from high-level politicians, ensuring the fight against Islamophobia is mainstreamed in key policy areas and planning strategic actions that member states can adopt to combat Islamophobia.



# Hope trumps hate – 26,584 times

“EVEN JUST HOLDING a card with the words *Hope Trumps Hate* can be a powerful thing,” said Mohammed Ali, a project manager for the Faiths Forum for London, as he stood outside the US Embassy.

Mohammed, along with representatives of the Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Christian faith, as well as the Muslim-Jewish women’s network, Nisa-Nashim, joined HOPE not hate in front of the US Embassy on 4 December.

HOPE not hate had launched a petition in December asking supporters to sign a letter to the US ambassador urging him to condemn President Donald Trump for sharing Islamophobic videos from a far right group on Twitter.

More than 26,600 people signed the letter before it was delivered to Woody Johnson, the US ambassador in Britain.

Ali notes that while “people may think petitions are small on the surface”, they are important and do have an effect if the effort is maintained. “I feel touched by the people who have come outside the embassy today. When I heard what Trump did, my heart was very heavy that day. What he did really does affect people’s lives,” said Julie Siddiqi, co-founder of Nisa-Nashim.

The US president retweeted the videos from Britain First, a far right extremist group in Britain. Jayda Fransen, the

group’s deputy and the original tweeter, thanked Trump publicly.

The video footage includes a “Muslim migrant” beating a Dutch boy with crutches but it has since emerged the attacker was neither a Muslim nor a migrant.

People from across the world condemned Trump for sharing the blatantly anti-Muslim videos. “I signed the letter and came out today out of my deep concern about the effect that this action by President Trump has had in recognising an organisation which represents hatred and opposition of everything I believe in this country,” said David Musgrave, Minister of a Methodist church in south London.

“Britain First and similar organisations have used the Christian label or even the symbols of Christian faith as a supposed sign of their British identity. I want to emphasise this is totally contradictory to my understanding of the faith which has nothing to do with exclusion.”

Prime minister Theresa May also issued a diplomatic rebuke and said it was “very clear” that endorsing Britain First on Twitter “was the wrong thing to do”. She has however, made clear there is no plan to rescind the state visit invitation extended to Trump at the White House back in January.

# MPs highlight Muslim generosity



A MUSLIM CHRISTMAS hashtag has been trending on social media, following a Parliamentary report on Muslim charitable efforts at this time of year.

The hashtag **#AVeryMerryMuslimChristmas** has been trending on Twitter, celebrating British Muslims' charitable contributions over the Christmas period.

This follows a new cross-party report showing that Muslims in Britain are not recognised for the amount of charity work they do.

Tory MP Anna Soubry and Labour MP Wes Streeting, co-chairs of a parliamentary group addressing Muslim issues and Islamophobia, said the role British Muslim charities play during the festive season is "wilfully ignored" and blamed the media for an inaccurate portrayal of Islam.

Soubry said the findings show that the three million Muslims in Britain

were supporting the poorest in their communities.

She added: "I have been deeply moved by the evidence we have heard. The number of British Muslim charities supporting non-Muslims during the season of goodwill is testament to the true nature of the Islamic faith."

The "A Very Merry Muslim Christmas" report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) states their contribution often goes unnoticed because they are not considered newsworthy.

Soubry and Streeting blasted the media for its heavy focus on fears about charities being abused for the financing of terrorism even though evidence points to the near-non-existent levels of such abuse.

During the five terror attacks and the Grenfell Tower tragedy the UK suffered this year, the frontline charity work done by British Muslims has had a higher profile.

MPs Anna Soubry & Wes Streeting, co-chairs of the APPG on British Muslims, with others at the report launch.  
Photo: Twitter

In the aftermath of the Manchester bombing, for example, Muslims rushed alongside other Britons to give blood to hospitals and offer rides home.

The APPG's report says: "These preliminary findings will, we hope, move us to look again at a community of less than three million people who, through their charitable activities, punch far above their weight."

Former Cabinet Minister Sayeeda Warsi, the APPG's treasurer, said Christmas was an appropriate time to publish the report.

"I think what we are trying to do is end the year with goodwill and we think it is right to release the findings of this report during this festive period," the Conservative peer said.

The response on Twitter has been very positive, with the hashtag **#AVeryMerryMuslimChristmas** trending at number one for hours – but it has also been criticised. Soubry admitted the report and slogan could spark a backlash.

Some Muslims on Twitter questioned why they needed to "prove" their charitable efforts and said the campaign felt forced. Another Twitter user, Angree Bindee, wrote: "Major FYI for everyone: Muslims don't need to prove themselves to you to be recognised as human beings **#AVeryMerryMuslimChristmas**". Other Muslims condemned the use of a 'Muslim' Merry Christmas for religious reasons.

Finally, some used the hashtag and attempted to link it to terrorism or dismiss the contributions. The majority of the tweets, however, welcomed the recognition of British Muslims' contributions.

## Community website launch

HOPE not hate has launched a new website and accompanying social media channels, focussing on our grassroots community work.

"As the profile of HOPE not hate continues to rise, it's been clear to us for some time that we have needed a platform for our more community-focused work," said Jemma Levene, deputy director of HOPE not hate.

"Whether people are looking to find out more about how to get involved, to book us for their school or community group or to read about what we've been up to, our HOPE not hate community site is already proving invaluable," she added.

Maatin Patel, digital director at HOPE not hate, explained that the digital channels "allow us to engage more actively with our strong national

base of supporters". He added that the charity website is a "unique part of the organisational structure created to help engage people on the ground and enable communities to build resistance to hate".

■ Find the new website at <https://charity.hopenothate.org.uk/> and follow for community news on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

## BELGIUM | No party, no hurrahs: 40 years of the VB

WIM HAELESTERMAN FOR AFF-VERZET/RÉSISTANCES IN BRUSSELS REPORTS

THE FAR RIGHT Vlaams Belang (VB) recently celebrated its 40th anniversary in hometown Antwerp. Founded in 1977 as the Vlaams Blok by a handful of right-wing extremists, most of them nationalist hardliners linked to the Nazi militia, the VMO, banned in 1981, the party was not, at first, taken seriously by the political world, the media and the public.

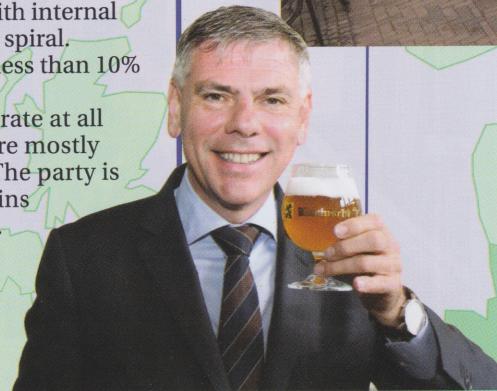
The party was represented by an extremely uncharismatic MP, had only limited success and struggled to survive on a daily basis. That changed in the 1980s when new right personalities like loudmouthed Philip Dewinter joined in, copying the methods of the French Front National and switching the focus from Flemish independence and amnesty for Nazi collaborators to immigration, criminality and law and order.

Despite its aggressive and violent reputation,

the party became popular in the 1990s, winning election after election. By 2004, the VB obtained one vote out of three in Flanders and was the strongest political force. A conviction for racism and the change of name that followed a little later, however, marked the start of a decline.

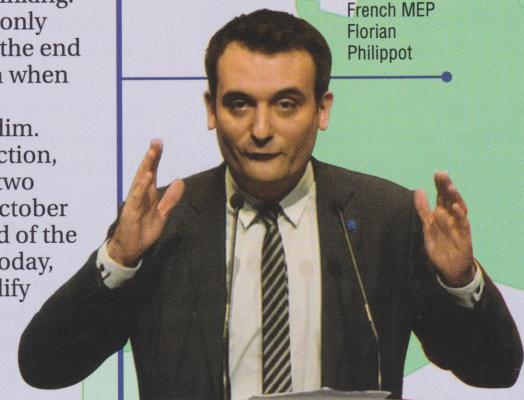
In recent years, the VB lost most of its popular support and saw many people leave, most heading for the N-VA, the rival nationalist party led by Bart De Wever. The party's leadership has also had to deal with internal feuds and is stuck in a downward spiral. Nowadays, the party commands less than 10% of the Flemish vote.

So, there wasn't much to celebrate at all and the birthday "festivities" were mostly ignored by the national media. The party is struggling for survival and remains a mere shadow of its former self.



Not much to celebrate Philip Dewinter

French MEP Florian Philippot



## FRANCE | The Patriots: new split from the Front National

BY JEAN-YVES CAMUS

MEP FLORIAN PHILIPPOT, formerly the Front National's number two, has quit after leader Marine Le Pen dropped Brexit as her main priority

In May 2017, shortly after Le Pen was defeated in the Presidential election, Philippot, then a vice-president of FN, decided to launch his own faction under the name of "The Patriots".

In September, Le Pen asked Philippot either to disband The Patriots or leave the FN which bans factions. Philippot chose to go his own way and registered The Patriots as a political party, now claiming 3,000 members including two other MEPs, Sophie Montel and Mireille d'Ornano.

This is the most notable split since Bruno Mégrét left in 1998. The difference between The Patriots and the FN is that Philippot believes it is

not possible to implement "France for the French" unless the country opts out of the EU, pointing out that unless France leaves, having tariffs imposed on foreign goods and labour, as the FN suggests, is only wishful thinking. Le Pen, however, says she will only decide on Remain or Leave at the end of the 5-year presidential term when she is elected.

The Patriots' prospects are dim. In the 2018 EU Parliament election, they can at best retain one or two seats. A survey published in October showed that, were a first round of the presidential election be held today, Marine Le Pen would still qualify for the second round with 21.5%. There seems to be no room for a dissident party on the extreme right.

## SPAIN | Extreme right violently attacks Catalan independence

FROM ANTIFEIXISTES.ORG/CATALUNYA

SINCE SEPTEMBER, big demonstrations have taken place – mostly in Catalunya but also in the rest of Spain – for and against the newly-declared Catalan Republic. Spanish nationalism, represented by the Societat Civil Catalana (SCC) has called thousands of people on several occasions into the streets of Barcelona – together with the conservative Popular Party (PP), the social-democrats (PSOE), the right-wing Ciudadanos party (C's) and all the far right from the Francoist Falange to the Nazi National Democracy (DN) – to oppose independence. All these mobilisations have been accompanied by fascist attacks on pro-independence, left-wing or immigrant people.

The night independence was declared, hundreds of fascists besieged

Catalan public radio and, during the other protests, journalists were victims of assault. In other cities like Zaragoza and Valencia, the far right has attacked supporters of dialogue on the Catalan Republic. In Zaragoza, hundreds of fascists gathered at the Pavilion where a rally was being held for dialogue between Spain and Catalunya on 24 September organised by the leftist Podemos and, *inter alia*, attacked the president of the Cortes de Aragón, Violet Barba, with a bottle. The fascists bellowed slogans like "Against treason, execution".

In Valencia, nearly a thousand rightist extremists attacked the annual 9 October left-wing demonstration. Several demonstrators were beaten up in front of television cameras, without police intervening or detaining any of the attackers.

## GREECE | Golden Dawn in turmoil

FROM PANAYOTE DIMITRAS FOR GREEK HELSINKI

THE AUTUMN was full of Golden Dawn (GD) linked news. On 1 November, Evangelia Kouniaki, a prosecution lawyer in the long running main GD trial, was attacked by GD thugs as she arrived at court and had to be briefly hospitalised. Her attacker, a well-known aide to GD leader, Nikos Michaloliakos, escaped arrest.

The GD successfully sought postponement of trials on 2 November of Michaloliakos for incitement through an inflammatory speech in 2011 and of GD MPs, Yannis Lagos and Nikos Michos for a violent attack against a leftist premises in 2013. Michos was also in the news because he quit GD on 26 September, along with dozen other GD members.

On 28 September, GD MP Elias Kasidiaris was handed a suspended six months' prison sentence for having incited violence against



## SWEDEN | From one supermarket to another – and back

BY DANIEL WIKLANDER FOR EXPO IN STOCKHOLM

DESPITE MASSIVE media coverage and growing respect from the rest of the Swedish far right, a promised show of force from the Nordic Resistance Movement (NMR) came to nothing. NMR, Sweden's main nazi organisation, publicly stated it would have a 1,000-strong attendance at their Gothenburg demonstration on 30 September but managed to gather only some 500–700 people from around the country.

The authorities had rejected the NMR's proposed route which would have allowed it within earshot of the synagogue where Yom Kippur was being observed. Instead, the nazis were given a short route between a hockey arena and a football stadium. The NMR marched from a supermarket car park a couple of

miles away and tried to force its way through police lines and on to the original route.

The police, still reeling from massive criticism after their meek handling of a smaller NMR demo a couple of weeks earlier, were having none of it. Lots of arrests were made, including NMR leader, Simon Lindberg. The nazis ended up kettled next to another supermarket with thousands of anti-fascist protestors on the adjacent streets, making it impossible for them to ever reach their assigned demo route.

After hours of waiting, with nazis beaten by police after attacking journalists, and promises from the NMR that they would not leave without their leader, they eventually left anyway, escorted back to the same parking lot they set out from before.



## GERMANY | Petry mutiny flops

BY TONI BRANDES FOR DER RECHTE RAND

BY THE EVENING of the general election on 24 September the picture was clear: 12.6% of the voters had opted for Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the far right party would have 94 MPs. The day after, at a party press conference, however, AfD leader, Frauke Petry, said she would not be part of the AfD group in the Bundestag and quit, followed by her partner, Marcus Pretzell.

Although tension between Petry and her party had long been building, the move was a surprise but their plan for a mass exit flopped, only one AfD MP following Petry's lead. Nationwide, 26 out of a total of 157 AfD MPs in regional parliaments left the party.

The parliamentary AfD's work began with the meeting of parliament at the end of October. Financially, the move into the Bundestag has been lucrative. In addition to a parliamentary allowance of €9,541 per MP, each MP receives a monthly allowance of about €9,000. And, there is a monthly base amount of €411,313 for the party faction plus all its members' salaries. More taxpayers' money – tens of millions of Euro – will be given to the AfD if it establishes a foundation at federal level. For the first time since the end of WWII, the extreme right in Germany will have almost unlimited financial resources at its disposal.



## HUNGARY | Vona war on Orbán

FROM ISTVÁN TÓTH IN BUDAPEST

IN AN INTERVIEW with the Hungarian daily *Magyar Nemzet* on 11 November, Gábor Vona, chairman of the far right Jobbik party, promised to make current PM Viktor Orbán accountable because he stands in the middle of a corruption cobweb. Vona said he believes next spring's parliamentary elections will shake the current system.

In another speech, on 23 October, he said no matter who the conservatives and the liberals, are, Jobbik wants to represent everyone: "No matter what the ideological background, the important question is with whom we can build the country." While ostensibly trying to reorient Jobbik along more moderate lines, Vona requested the nazi László Toroczkai to become one of his deputies.

It would not be a big surprise if Vona has since regretted his decision

because, on almost every issue, Toroczkai has taken a position contrary to the party's official stand, including on such an important issue as the government's refugee quota referendum that Jobbik does not support.

Recently the National Security Committee (NSC) decided to hold a hearing on Toroczkai's relations with extremist organizations. Toroczkai has not yet decided whether to go to the NSC meeting where he would be asked about his involvement in extremist and paramilitary organizations like the Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom (HVIM/Youth Movement of the Sixty-Four Counties), as he was one of its founders. Since 2013, he has not taken part in the leadership of the movement and considers it a joke to call HVIM an armed paramilitary organisation.

## I MONITOR IN ATHENS

Roma in 2011 in an Athens suburb with a significant Roma population. On 8 November, Christos Zervas, a right-hand man of GD's leader, was sentenced to a seven years' jail suspended for robbery and dangerous bodily harm to a student, outside GD HQ.

On 9 November, a member of a nine-person GD squad that, in 2012, attacked a barber shop owned by a Pakistani in an Athens suburb – injuring two persons and then threw a firebomb at the shop – was jailed on appeal to 13 years and 4 months in jail. On the other hand, on 24 October and 1 November, five anti-fascist activists were acquitted of charges for attacks against GD members on Crete, in 2012 -2013.

GD, meanwhile, takes consolation that it is not slipping in the opinion polls...

## CANADA | Far right contest elections and massive anti-Hate march in Quebec

MARTIN THÉRIAULT REPORTS FROM OTTAWA

THE FAR RIGHT and Islamophobes ran candidates in local municipal elections in small towns in Quebec in November. Without any victory, some results are, however, a warning sign for the future. In one town, members and supporters of the far right La Meute ran a list of 5 candidates. In one district, it got 36% of the vote and, in another, 24%. In another small rural town, near the US/Canada border, a far rightist and vicious Islamophobe was able to get 24%, running for mayor.

The far rightists hide their programme under the veil of populism and regionalism. Some have now created a "United the Patriots" (sic) movement to organise for the next elections at local level, while also preparing for the next provincial election to be held in Quebec in less than a year.

In Montreal, the social-democratic Project Montreal won a majority of seats on the Council and elected the city's first ever female mayor, prompting the far right to ask its followers to "leave the City as quick as possible".

On 12 November, more than 3,000 marched against hate, racism and the extreme right. Supported by 170 groups and organizations, this was the largest demonstration against hate and the right-wing in Montreal in more than 25 years.



## USA/CNC | Government attacks unite communities

FROM THE CENTRE FOR NEW COMMUNITY IN CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

IN SEPTEMBER, Donald Trump's White House needlessly plunged the lives of nearly 800,000 immigrant youth and their families into chaos by announcing it would, end early next year, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), an Obama-era programme that assists undocumented people brought to the U.S. as children.

Most beneficiaries of the programme have improved their lives substantially since gaining temporary protection from

## SERBIA | Weird new fascist strategy

FROM DAŠKO MILINOVĆ IN NOVI SAD

IT IS NOT unusual for fascists to have two or even more faces when presenting themselves. Anti-fascists put a lot of time and effort in exposing various "patriotic" and "traditionalist" organisations and individuals as ordinary fascists. Their fake public facade of a "concerned citizen" usually hides their agenda of outright fascism. Serbian fascists have taken this ploy a step further.

Two major events marked a new strategy this autumn. First was a gathering of the "Serbian Right", in Belgrade's Sava Centre, which gave full support to Serbia's pro-EU, neoliberal PM, Aleksandar Vučić. Among the people and movements involved were the ones posing as being nationalist and traditionalist, working as NGOs.

A few days later, an openly fascist conference "Europe of free nations"

took place in a Belgrade hotel, organised by the German Nazi National Democrats (NPD) and minor, street level, fascist groups. This gathering condemned the Serbian premier, mourned the Tripartite Pact (Nazi

Germany, fascist Italy and imperialist Japan) and Nazi rule of Serbia 1941-45, calling for "white patriots of Europe to rise...". Bizarrely, both conferences featured a lot of the same people, under the moniker of different groups.

While giving support to Vučić in the Sava Centre as "Alternativa", the same nazi thugs also gave Hitler salutes and condemned Vučić as Srbska Akcija in the "88 Rooms" hotel. Right-wing NGOs like Alternativa get a lot of government funding for various projects of supposed "national importance".



DACA and demanded that any legislative replacement in Congress include drastic cuts to legal immigration and further border militarisation. Meanwhile, immigrant communities have been admirably defiant, calling for expanded protection for all immigrants rather than a simple DACA replacement. In early November, DACA recipients occupied a U.S. Senate office building in D.C. and held events across the country to make this very call.

*Guest column...*

# Twitter Bans Nazis

**Leaders of Britain First and other notorious extremists are having their accounts closed down. But how effective will Twitter be in banning users who promote violence and hatred?**

**Safya Khan-Ruf** reports

TWITTER HAS LAUNCHED a “purge” of its platform, shutting down accounts based on new rules against abuse and threats of violence.

The notorious leaders of Britain First, Jayda Fransen and Paul Golding, along with the English Defence League and Europe's far right Generation Identity movement, have already had their Twitter accounts permanently suspended.

Other infamous white nationalist and white supremacist figures in the USA such as Jared Taylor have also had their accounts taken down. League of the South's Hunter Wallace and the Traditionalist Workers Party are also banned.

Other purged accounts include those of nazi leader Jeff Schoep and Vanguard America, the group that alleged murderer James Alex Fields stood with in Charlottesville. The American Nazi Party's account is also gone.

## HATE SPEECH & IMAGES

Twitter announced the changes to its policies on hate speech in November.

Under the new rules, users are no longer able to use “hateful images or symbols” in profile images or headers and “may not affiliate with organisations that — whether by their own statements or activity both on and off the platform — use or promote violence against civilians to further their causes”.

The company has presented the guidelines as simply a clarification of existing rules but appears to acknowledge the vast amounts of hate-filled, white supremacist messages and swastika-toting Pepes appearing on its platform.

## OPTIMISTIC

Since Twitter announced the changes, activists and NGOs campaigning against online hate have been cautiously optimistic that the social media platform is taking concrete steps against rhetoric encouraging hate and violence.

Those who had previously raised concerns over allowing members of the far right to use Twitter to spread hate-filled rhetoric also welcomed the change.

However, some on the Right have been very critical, encouraging supporters to migrate to alternative platforms like Gab which is uncensored and claiming that Silicon Valley is determined to silence opposing voices.

Andrew Torba, founder of Gab, has criticised Twitter's decision to monitor users offline. “This is a scary precedent to set,” he wrote in an e-mail to the digital media website, Mashable. “Rules like this will only force dissidents and those who are speaking truth to power to silence themselves or risk being silenced by Twitter.”

## FREE SPEECH NOT HATE SPEECH

Joe Mulhall, a senior researcher for HOPE not hate, commented on the changes: “This is not an issue of free speech. Twitter is privately owned and has the right choose to deny nazis the use of its platform. They are free to spew hate elsewhere.”

Gab is only a fraction of Twitter's size – 300,000 compared to more than 300 million – and is already home to a large number of far right accounts. Many users who gained a huge following supporting Trump during his presidential campaign moved

over to Gab when they were later banned from Twitter.

“Nearly everyone on it seems to embrace some type of right wing ideology —meaning there are very few liberals around for trolls to target with hate speech. Trump isn't on it, so his fans rely on an account that reposts what the president writes on Twitter as an alternative... Nevertheless, Gab is where some worried Trump supporters expect to wind up...” according to *Newsweek*.

Brad Griffin, the self-proclaimed Southern nationalist behind the “White Lives Matter” rally in Tennessee this October, wrote on his Twitter account: “In light of the upcoming Twitter purge, follow me [on Gab].”

## HOLOCAUST DENIERS

Some nazi accounts have been calling 18 December the “great shoah'ing”, playing on the Hebrew term for Holocaust. Others have been using memes as a countdown until their accounts are removed.

“We are aware these banned individuals will not end their activities and are likely to migrate to less monitored platforms like Gab,” said Mulhall. “While their ability to recruit supporters, propagate hate and impact wider society will be severely limited, these platforms will allow them to better organise themselves,” he warned.

Twitter had already taken some half-measure actions against some high-profile white nationalist and supremacist accounts last month, stripping verified status from, among others, alt-right figurehead Richard Spencer and Jason Kessler, the organiser of the Charlottesville “Unite The Right” rally.

## INCREASING PRESSURE

Twitter's latest measure echoes moves by other social media platforms to tackle online hate. The large social media companies have had an increasingly bad year in terms of PR as criticism over white supremacists and nazis on their platforms has increased.

Hundreds of major brands pulled advertising from YouTube, owned by Google, after revelations that their ads were being placed next to extremist or hateful content.

Facebook is one of several social media giants to increase the number of its moderators and Google has announced it will hire 10,000 moderators for YouTube. The company has been criticised for failing to safeguard children from extremist content.

## HOPE TACKLING HATE

HOPE not hate has also fought the rhetoric of far right figures online. In 2017, we put pressure on payment platform Patreon to ban Lauren Southern, a far right political activist, from the platform. We also showed how anti-Muslim activists exploit terror attacks and amplify their messages with “bot armies”.

Thanks to a HOPE not hate exposé, we revealed how a Breitbart writer was running a secret right-wing “free speech” Facebook group, the Young Right Society (YRS), frequently awash with racist and “alt-right” content.

The impact users can have on social media platforms was proven in the 2016 US election and during the Brexit campaign in the UK. Russian-linked Twitter accounts were even used to “extend the impact and harm” of four 2017 terrorist attacks in the UK, according to a recent study by Cardiff University researchers. ●

# Holding falsehood

**Nick Lowles** reports on HOPE not hate's legal victory over Nigel Farage

IN NOVEMBER, Nigel Farage was forced into a humiliating legal climb down when, in a settlement, he undertook never to repeat false claims that HOPE not hate pursued "violent and undemocratic means".

Agreeing never to encourage anyone else to repeat this statement either, Farage has been made accountable for the highly damaging comments he threw out on LBC radio on 21 December last year during an argument about comments made on Twitter by Brendan Cox, widower of murdered MP Jo Cox.

Following the December 2016 terrorist attack on a Christmas market in Berlin, the former UKIP leader had tweeted: "Terrible news from Berlin but no surprise. Events like these will be the Merkel legacy".

Brendan Cox, whose wife was murdered by a white supremacist and in whose name we have run More In Common and Great Get Together events around the UK, responded on Twitter: "@Nigel\_Farage blaming politicians for the actions of extremists? That's a slippery slope Nigel".

Asked the following day on the Nick Ferrari show about Brendan's tweet, Farage responded: "Yes, well of course he would know more about extremists than me, Mr Cox. He backs organisations like HOPE not hate who masquerade as being lovely and peaceful but actually pursue violent and undemocratic means."

Notwithstanding the tremendous insensitivity towards a man who had recently lost his wife in an horrific murder, these remarks were picked up across the mainstream media and our charity received a barrage of messages on social media accusing it of extremism, fascism and violence.

The fact is that we are an entirely peaceful organisation. We do not organise counter-demonstrations or encourage anyone to engage in violent conduct.

Our aim is to bring people together to fight extremism. We have some very

sensitive work ongoing in schools, with young people in very divided communities, and in penetrating violent and extreme hate groups.

Within minutes of making this statement, Farage's comments were being taken up and across the media. His statement was also taken up enthusiastically by his own fans on social media. Both HOPE not hate – and I personally – received a barrage of abuse and threats.

Arron Banks, UKIP's former largest donor and head of Leave.EU (the unofficial Brexit campaign), tweeted out another highly defamatory claim to his supporters:

"Hope not hate is a vile organisation that arranged a mass confrontation in a pub where Nigel was having lunch with his daughters. [Farage's] right."

Breitbart London also began an immediate and intensive campaign of vilification against us, running six stories attacking HOPE not hate within a few days.

Its editor, Raheem Kassam, a close confidant of former Donald Trump adviser Steve Bannon, even launched a crowd funding appeal to collect dirt on HOPE not hate.

We instantly demanded an apology but Farage ignored our legal letter. We then began legal action.

We did not do this lightly, not least because we knew how expensive and difficult libel actions can be. But, supported by donations from over 16,000 people, we took action and even despite the ups and downs of the next 10 months we stood firm.

We wanted Farage to take back his words but also to draw a line in the sand over false news. For too long, right-wing politicians have been able to say what they want with impunity and regardless of its accuracy or consequences. But we said: No more!

At no time during has Farage ever offered a "truth" defence, preferring instead to look for legal points to strike out the case.

At a half-day court hearing, held in early November, his barrister told the judge when pressed that Farage would offer an "opinion" defence. He backed up this point when he finally provided us with his defence argument, under instructions from the judge, and cited section 10 of the European Human Rights Act, which covers freedom of speech. The irony of this was not lost on us.

With a two-day High Court hearing fast approaching and a Court of Appeal judgement in the Lachaux v Independent Print Ltd libel case, which redefined the definition of serious harm in our favour, Farage's lawyers approached us for a deal.

With costs mounting and the uncertainty of how the judge would interpret a number of legal and technical challenges, we agreed.

After a day of talks between lawyers, Nigel Farage and I agreed a deal. The former UKIP leader would issue a public statement to the court acknowledging that we were not a violent organisation. He also agreed that he would not repeat the allegations again and nor would he encourage others to repeat them. In return, both parties agreed to pay their own costs.

He has now attempted to engage in spin to his own supporters about the result, but the simple fact is that he lost. He now faces legal costs likely to be in excess of £100,000.

Banks was a bit more honest in his assessment of the outcome, firstly tweeting that Farage had to withdraw because he did not have the money to continue the case and then admitting that we had won but warned that they would be back to win the next round. "Ding, ding", his tweet ended.

Frustrated by Farage's spinning, I challenged the former UKIP leader to invite me onto his LBC radio show that evening to discuss who had won the case. Strangely enough I heard nothing. The following day we were both invited onto BBC Radio Five Live to debate the case but, again, he refused to face me.

This case was never about money. It

# d to account

Nigel Farage  
Photo: Michael Vadon



was about holding falsehood to account. Never again can Farage repeat these highly damaging and totally groundless smears. We also hope that he will think twice about casually throwing around falsehoods and smears in future.

With this victory, HOPE not hate is also putting purveyors of false news on notice: no more!

There needs to be a line in the sand for those who blithely, and without fear or concern for the consequences, throw out falsehood. We will challenge and expose those who seek to pursue the politics of division and intolerance on the back of such tactics.

Of course, we are living in a wider era of fake news. The rise of Trump, including the lies told in his election – and the alleged interference of Russia in that election – as well as the division and damage which followed the Brexit vote that occurred partly as the consequence of campaign lies and whipping up immigration fears mean that these are very dangerous times.

We are under no illusion that this victory will stop these falsehoods and fake news, but it might make people realise that they can be held accountable for their words and, more importantly, give encouragement to others that fake news can be challenged.

HOPE not hate has been heartened by the tremendous support we have seen for our action. Without the support of thousands of ordinary people, we would never have been able to afford a libel action that is a difficult, lengthy and costly option not open to many.

We now need to build on that energy, that sense of collective hope and, certainly, at HOPE not hate we will be redoubling our efforts to expose the fake news cycle and its purveyors.

We've already challenged Breitbart, Infowars, YouTubers like Paul Joseph Watson and former English Defence League boss Stephen Lennon (Tommy Robinson) for pushing out a torrent of conspiracy and other far right and anti-Muslim material. And, we will be exposing others who engage in spreading lies and concocted stories online.

Last December, we put Nigel Farage on warning. Following *his* public climb-down, we issued the challenge to others because we know that failing to do so could have disastrous consequences. ●

# Alternate

By Alex Krasodomski-Jones and Joe Cooke

"WE SHOULD have a contest", wrote the leader of the Free World, Donald J. Trump, on Twitter at the end of November. "Which of the networks", he asked, "is the most dishonest, corrupt and/or distorted in its coverage of your favourite President (me)". This latest attack on the media was followed by a shorter tweet, linking his 43 million followers to a pro-Trump website doing a roaring side trade in everything from "false flag terrorism", "weaponised vaccination" and the "occult magic" that holds ultimate power over the fabric of our reality. It reads like an A-Z guide of conspiracy thinking: an utterly alternate reality courtesy of the 45<sup>th</sup> President of the United States.

The ways alternate realities exist online, their influence and their power, and their real-world repercussions bear investigation. Conspiracy theories depend on an alternative view of the facts that underpin the world, an alternate reality, in which any

number of things are possible, a reality in which NASA faked the moon landings and medical companies poison our children for profit.

The web provides the most fertile territory for alternate realities we have ever seen. Alternate news websites look like, well, news websites. Long gone are the days of the handwritten note, photocopied and stapled and stuffed through a letterbox. Whether it was a tract from a fascist reading group, a promise of Salvation from Seventh-Day Adventists or dire warnings of shadowy cabals, the medium was the message. Scratched-out block capitals on lined paper, photocopied at the corner shop lay somewhere on the spectrum of funny and menacing but looked ludicrous when laid next to a newspaper, magazine or journal.

No longer. News and 'fake news' are structurally indistinguishable. A website sharing the latest and greatest conspiracy thinking looks identical to any other news

website. The content is polished. The journalists even have by-lines.

Presentation is everything. Milton Cooper's 1991 *Behold a Pale Horse* was just another mishmash of conspiracy theories but by bundling them together into a paperback and selling it in shops, it received international attention.

In the 1990s, it was more difficult for Cooper, Icke and the like to have their tracts published but the web has significantly lowered the barrier to entry.

Originally released online, the conspiracy-laden *Zeitgeist* movie was produced in the style of a Hollywood epic, receiving dozens of reviews and ending up on Netflix, a distributor boasting over 100 million subscribers.

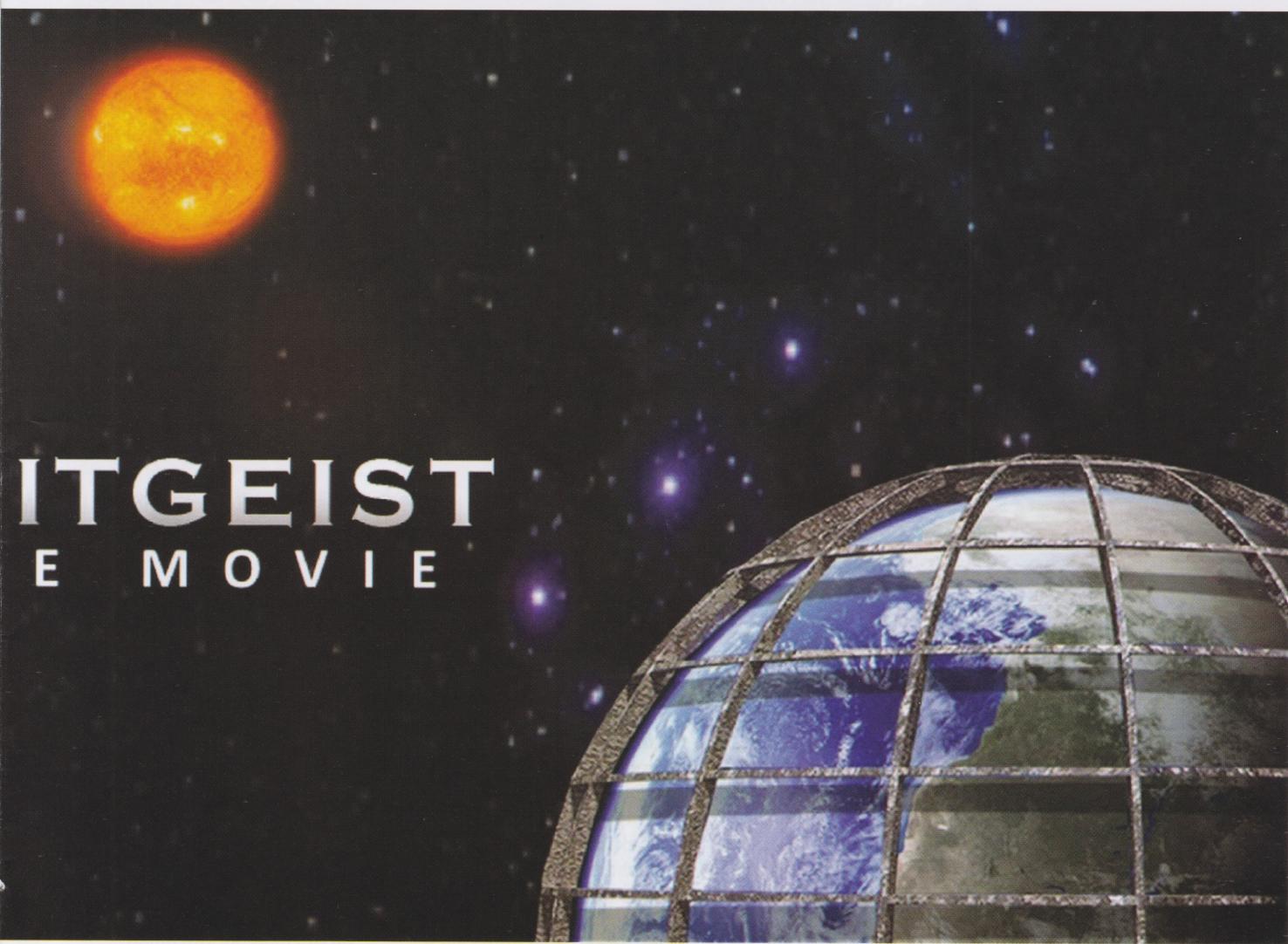
The studio from which Alex Jones and his staff broadcast *Infowars* to his two million followers is as professional a set up as it gets. Not that this is surprising. It is, after all, conspiracy as a profession.

In as far as the medium is indeed the message, the



space between the wildest conspiracy theories and day-to-day news reporting is vanishing. Putting the reporting of conspiracy theories on an equal footing with the reporting of facts is only half of the equation. The web provided an equal platform not just of presentation, but of substance. Conspiracy thinkers found that suddenly, at their fingertips, there was a digital storehouse of

# Realities



"evidence".

Architects and Engineers for 9/11 Truth describe themselves as "dedicated to researching and disseminating scientific information". The modern day "flat earth" believer implores the audience to "research flat earth!". Don't just take my word for it, they say: check the evidence. And the web provides it in abundance.

Through the web, conspiracy "researchers"

can, for the first time, point to hundreds of thousands of pieces of evidence for their claims, slick, forensic, persuasive evidence.

The flat earth community has compiled huge archives of the stuff. Most common are photos of ruler-straight horizons taken by budding flat earth scholars. These are supported by science experiments that rule out a curved surface of water, by early maps and historical

documents explaining the "globe conspiracy" and by discrepancies in NASA's photographs of the earth.

Huge, archived networks of evidence and discussion can be found for nearly every conspiracy theory one can imagine, from 9/11 to anti-vaccination.

That evidence like this is easily debunked does not matter. It's still facts against "facts". And as they bounce around the echo chambers

of conspiracy theory online – that amplify voices that confirm theories and ban voices that don't – the effort required to do so increases.

The web has provided a new environment for conspiracy thinking. It has evolved from the ranting of the regular down the local and anonymous letters through the letterbox to a slick ecosystem of falsehood in which hundreds of people can come together to tell

votleave.uk

TUR  
(population)  
IS JOINING

Vote Leave

hundreds of lies, hundreds of times, all supported by hundreds of pieces of "evidence".

The internet sustains these alternate realities without a problem. There is space for those who believe that vaccines cause autism and those who don't, space for 9/11 "truthers" and those who believe the official account, space for flat earthers and "globeheads" (that's the pejorative term).

They exist side-by-side, a few clicks away from one another, despite a fundamental disagreement over what reality looks like.

This is not what we were promised. The web was supposed to be the ultimate "free market of ideas". We would be free to share and discuss ideas and the good ones would float to the top.

There are dozens of reasons why this has not proved to be the case – pay-to-say advertising, a market for controversial or outrageous opinions, manipulation of the "market" by state and private interests – but at its most fundamental it fails because there simply *isn't any competition*.

There is space enough for as many permutations of fact as might be needed. If you and your network believe that 9/11 was an inside job, well, there's plenty of digital real estate for that. Sure, plenty of people log onto flat earth forums to jeer and laugh and troll but they don't threaten the existence of these communities and they are certainly not changing any minds.

Anyway, who cares? With a few notable exceptions, conspiracy theories tend to

be pretty harmless. What does it matter to us if a bunch of people on the internet are wrong about the moon landings?

During the referendum campaign, those who were thinking about voting Leave were treated in a manner not unlike the way we treat conspiracy theorists: they were irrational, they didn't get it.

"Try arguing with facts and you get nowhere", wrote one exasperated *Guardian* columnist. Just as the educated elite jeer and laugh at the flat earthers, we jeered and laughed at the "little Englanders".

Disaffection with the political system," irrational" protest voting and a widely-held suspicion of the political and academic elite were reduced to xenophobia and stupidity.

Critiques of a "Westminster Bubble", fears of globalisation and of anger at failed social integration projects were dismissed as conspiracy theories. Remainers utterly failed to recognise the concerns as real, rooted in a reality they did not and could not recognise.

This was exacerbated by the web. At any given moment, one community heard that immigration was higher than ever, that immigration is an intolerable burden on the healthcare, housing and education systems supported by facts and figures and infographics.

Another community, a couple of Facebook groups along, heard the opposite: immigration is low, migrants pay their taxes and our healthcare, housing and

# TURKEY (on 76 million) JOINING THE EU

Take back control

education systems depend on their labour. Two fundamentally, factually opposing, views of what the world looks like.

Dozens of conversations between Brexit leavers and Remainers never got beyond incredulity. Debating the risks or rewards of Turkey joining the EU was pointless if one person knew it wouldn't happen and the other was certain it would.

Debates like these are reminiscent of the infamous viral photo of the dress: some people saw a blue dress, some a gold dress. Tens of millions of comments, tweets, shares and articles later and some people still saw a blue dress and some a gold dress.

The strains this places on our political and democratic system are enormous.

Constructive debate

requires a middle-ground. A healthy democracy is dependent on some sense of shared reality. At its heart, democracy is negotiation, compromise and concession, all of which requires common ground and a level of trust.

Preservation of this common ground, some common viewpoint, is critical. The political theorist Hannah Arendt described the threat of losing "a common and commonly recognized reality" as "a political problem of the first order".

The web has made this easier and cheaper than ever. Writing in the 1960s, she noted that wholesale distortions of facts and reality would require a pretty serious monopoly of power. It's probably for the best she didn't live to see Silicon Valley.

Are there solutions to

bad facts? To alternate online realities? Legislative approaches are authoritarian. Demanding Internet Service Providers and big tech platforms clamp down on their users feels like an extremely unwise investment of power and responsibility over free expression in private corporations.

If there is something we can learn from our mishandling of alternate realities in the past, it is that treating them with ridicule gets us nowhere. The solution lies in taking these alternate realities more seriously than we have done in the past.

From across the Atlantic, Emmett Rensin's devastating critique of "smug liberalism"

in Vox last year demanded we leave behind the scorn for, and the mockery of, people with "bad facts". It gets us nowhere. "The wages of smug", he wrote, "is Trump".

It won't be easy. The temptation will be to continue to laugh and tear our hair out at people who don't get it, whose news is "fake", who, like Michael Gove suggested in the days leading up to the referendum vote, "have had enough of experts". People who live in an alternate reality to us.

But, without common ground our democracy will continue to creak, cooperation and compromise will continue to evade us and we will suffer for it.

■ Alex Krasodomski-Jones is a digital researcher at the think tank Demos. Joe Cooke is a conspiracy theory researcher.

# Is David Icke Britain's

If David Icke is not Britain's leading antisemite, I have yet to come across anybody else preaching the Protocols of the Elders of Zion to thousands of bewitched followers in sold-out arenas in Britain, writes Marlon Solomon

Former professional footballer and sports presenter David Icke has been Britain's leading conspiracy theorist for decades. He is hugely popular throughout the world and capable of selling out venues usually reserved for rock stars.

Most famous for his belief in multi-dimensional reptiles, he is less well known for the ancient anti-Jewish prejudice that lies at the heart of so much of his theory.

The potency of his brand of antisemitism is enhanced by its masquerading as being anti-racist and solely concerned with promoting Palestinian justice.

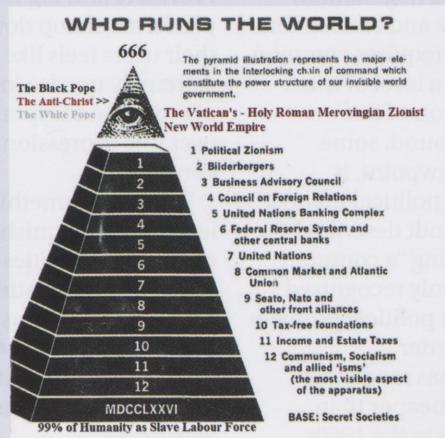
More traditional forms of antisemitism made no distinction between "good" Jews (anti-Zionists) and "bad" Jews (Zionists) but Icke uses anti-Zionism to hide what is, at times, little less than Nazi-strength antisemitic propaganda. Whether he does this consciously or not is of little concern as many people have been and are being fooled, or at best ignoring it, thus he gets an unfettered pass to ply his trade in large scale venues in Britain.

Icke is a conspiracist omnivore: splicing all manner of esoterism, pseudo-science, New World Order end-times scenarios and melding them into a

coherent ideology. He is an entrepreneur of improvisational millennialism; deftly capable of rearranging copious amounts of eclectic hidden knowledge and distrust of authority to construct an apocalyptic New-age rhapsody.

Doomsday scenarios are often impossible to resist within the conspiracist worldview as without them the alleged conspiracy itself begins to either fall apart or must be reduced in scope.

But it is antisemitism that runs through the core of so many of Icke's theories and he places "Rothschild Zionists" at the forefront of the "plan to kill you".



Rothschild Zionism, World War 3 & The New World Order - David Icke ...  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fael3-G-NTM>  
7 Aug 2016 - Uploaded by David Icke  
TheWorldWideWakeUp.com 2016/17 Rothschild Zionism, World War 3 ... all the way to his Son, the coming ...



# Leading Antisemite?



Although Britain's leading conspiracist, Icke is from the American millennialist tradition of the early 1990s when the right-wing isolationist militia men and New World Order conspiracists coalesced with the New Age movement and "ufologists" to create a colossal galactic conspiracy.

As Michael Barkun noted in *Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*: "They construct these end-times scripts from an eclectic combination of ingredients, Babylonian mystery religions, The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, Masonic magicians and UFO's, the Illuminati and the UN. As everything in the conspiracist's world view is interconnected, so every source may be mined for something useful, no matter what taboos may be attached to it."

For this reason, though laughable to many, super-conspiracism is extremely dangerous. Barkun concurs: "Indeed... the greater the stigma, the more attractive the source becomes, for the intensity of rejection is its truthfulness." Thus, the taboo around more pernicious conspiracy theories such as Holocaust denial and the *Protocols* are very likely taken by Icke and his followers to be the very essence of their validity.

The apocalyptic milieu of pre-millennium hysteria inspired the creators of *The X-files*, the tagline *Trust*

*No One* itself a homage to the paranoid style. This was the time when the Men in Black and the aliens became "in on it" together. Known as *super-conspiracism* – or meta-conspiracism, all the conspiracies are linked together, often in a pyramidal hierarchy, with each smaller *event* and *systemic conspiracy* nested within.

Above this there is a unifying supernatural force controlling the lesser earth-bound conspirators.

For these super-conspiracists, the Vatican is the supreme manifestation of evil rulers of the world.

The main danger arising from writing off super-conspiracists simply as cranks who are of little consequence is that we stop listening to what they are saying.

In his superb study of conspiracism, *A Year Among the Truthers*, Jonathan Kay spells it out: "You cannot challenge the enemies of the Enlightenment if you do not understand them."

Since being introduced to the *Protocols* by the ultra right-wing ufologist William Milton Cooper in the 1990s, Icke has been successfully touting them throughout the Western World.

In his 1994 book *The Robots Rebellion*, he describes them as "the Illuminati Protocols" in what appears to be a sincere attempt to distance the tract from Jews themselves.

However, over the following twenty years, as he got deeper into antisemitic theory, the Elders seem to have undergone a reconversion to Judaism and are now referred to as "Rothschild Zionists". In fact, he has used several different terms to refer to these evil Jews: Zionists, Rothschild Zionists, Khazars, The Khazarian Mafia, for example.

### ROTHSCHILD ZIONISM

In the section of his live show titled "Rothschild Zionism", Icke avoids mentioning the *Protocols* by name but his introduction closely echoes the note of prophecy: "In the *Matrix* movie, there's something called the Zion mainframe. Well Zionism, Rothschild Zionism is a mainframe of this network... it is a secret society, putting its agents in places of power. A secret society within the web to massively contribute and control our global society."

So, just the *Protocols*. But, then, over the next ten minutes he goes into standard hardline anti-Zionist politics. He declares that he has nothing against Jews and separates good Jews (anti-Zionists) from the rest. At the last count around 93% of British Jews would fit into the "not so good" category.

Then, after enraging the audience with the plight of the Palestinians, he proceeds to go full *Protocol*, going through the most evil and powerful Jews in control of the world and often using Nazi-era antisemitic imagery.

The notion of Jews using world leaders as puppets to further their diabolic aims comes direct from the *Protocols*. Billionaire philanthropist George Soros is the most recent incarnation of the archetypal Jewish puppet master, evidenced in far right demonstrations across Europe that blame Soros for everything from immigration to global financial crashes and terrorism.

Gideon Rachman's recent piece for the *Financial Times* – "Soros hatred is a global sickness" – gives a brief overview of how George Soros has become new the figurehead for far right antisemitic hatred.

"There may appear to be different 'sides' but so often they are controlled and manipulated by the same force"

The above image and caption is taken from David Icke's *Guide to the Global Conspiracy* in his chapter on the Jews entitled *The Cruellest Hoax*. The illustration appears to be an amalgam of Jew portrayed as Devil, as per medieval antisemitism, whilst simultaneously pulling the strings of humanity. It gives a reasonable indication of how deep into antisemitic theory Icke is.





#### 1938 antisemitic Nazi cartoon

These are classic antisemitic images of the Jew as an Octopus in control of the world. The above image is a Nazi cartoon published in 1938 – an image used in the German publication of the Protocols. (Note the blood seeping from the wounded earth echoing the Blood Libel)



A similar image from early 20th century American antisemitic propaganda depicting Jewish infiltration of New York City's Tammany Hall as part of their quest to take over the city.



Contemporary antisemitic image used by David Icke showing the Octopus smothering the White House. With this image, there is one striking difference; the letter 'Z' has been slapped on the Star of David. Icke and other antisemites thus defend it as criticism of Zionism and not Jews.

Further reading in the same chapter gives more clues:

*"Satanism is at the heart of everything the leaders of the (Rothschild) family do and one of their sources of esoteric influence and 'magic' is the Kabbalah."*

Back to Icke's live show; going through the current the Elders of Zion (Rothschild Zionists) he indicts them for everything from wars to terrorism to climate change.

#### ROTHSCHILD SOUP

Icke's obsession with the Rothschild conspiracy is longstanding. It is also a conspiracy that has been used to indict Jews for over 200 years.

But it is not just evil Jewish bankers that Icke's interested in...

*"Hundreds of thousands of Rothschild offspring, most of them produced in sperm bank breeding programmes to ensure that the genetic 'purity' is both maintained and expanded."* (David Icke's Guide to the Global Conspiracy)

*"The administrators, who will be their advisers (will be) specialists bred and reared from early childhood to rule the affairs of the world."* – from The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion

#### HOLOCAUST DENIAL

Icke has been promoting Holocaust denial since the late 1990's, losing a publishing deal as a result. His website is teeming with links to far right websites, including to the Institute of Historical Review (IHR), a beacon of the international Holocaust denial movement with numerous links to nazi organisations.

He has promoted James Bacque's book

*Other Losses* and has supported the notorious Holocaust denier, the late Ernst Zündel though claiming to do so only in support of free speech.

In his self-published *And The Truth Shall Set You Free*, Icke denounced the Nuremberg war crimes trials as a "farce" and "a calculated exercise in revenge and manipulation". He continues... "why do we play a part in suppressing alternative information to the official line of the Second World War? How is it right that while this fierce suppression goes on, free copies of the Spielberg film, *Schindler's List*, are given to schools to indoctrinate children with the unchallenged version of events."

Yet, Icke still insists he is not a Holocaust denier: "I am not a Holocaust denier. I have never denied the Holocaust", he says but his website tells a different story.

In July, a concerned Jewish resident of Manchester tweeted The Lowry Hotel, asking its management why it was hosting a Holocaust denier and linking to a page on his website that talks about "the alleged persecution of the Jews" and the "fake Jewish Holocaust narrative."

Above these words, it is emblazoned "BY DAVID." Now I'm not claiming to be Agatha Christie but I would think it reasonable to deduce from this that Icke is a Holocaust denier.

The Lowry Hotel swiftly cancelled his show, followed by venues in Sheffield and Liverpool. The *Manchester Evening News* and *ITV.com* immediately picked up the story. Within an hour, however, they were threatened by Icke's legal team and removed the article.

Icke's "get-out clause" is that the words are not his... he simply quotes and links to other websites – usually far right websites – which leaves him clear of charges of Holocaust denial. Ironically, the page on his website mentioned above is filed under the section "MIND CONTROL AND POLITICAL MANIPULATION."

There is some truly sickening, blood-curdling stuff on Icke's website which is frequented by many thousands of people.

As a couple of examples: Icke in his own words calls the late Elie Wiesel a "Holocaust Fraud". On this, post he simply links to a genuine article from the *Jewish Telegraph Agency* where the Holocaust survivor Wiesel – still alive at the time – gave a speech in Hungary warning of the dangers of Holocaust denial and the rising popularity of antisemitic publications.

To put this into some kind of perspective: Wiesel was an inmate at Buchenwald and Auschwitz – taken from his home with his family and deported to the camps – this story, told in his book *Night*, won him the Nobel prize for literature.

#### DAVID ICKE'S OWN WORDS

Another example, from many, is a story on his website entitled *World Jewish Congress Approves Resolution Calling for Criminalising Holocaust Denial* under which – again in his own words – he writes:

"The arrogance of these people knows no bounds. What about the Palestinian holocaust? The Native American holocaust? The Cambodian

holocaust? And all the holocausts instigated by Rothschild Zionism? You know what they call 'anti-Semitic' most of all? The truth."

Under these words hangs the link where one can "read more", connecting the user to what looks like a neo-nazi blog called *The Ugly Truth* which has the charming tagline - "Intelligent 'anti-Semitism' for thinking Gentiles" and this image:



*"I strongly believe that a small Jewish clique which has contempt for the mass of Jewish people worked with non-Jews to create the First World War, the Russian Revolution, and the Second World War." And The Truth Shall Set You Free,*

David Icke

Icke promotes the Khazar Hoax theory that 90-95% of Jews (Ashkenazi Jews) originate from the Khazar region rather than the Middle East. He quotes Jack Bernstein in his book "Regarding the tie between the elite Ashkenazi Jews and the Nazis, take a look at the word 'Ashkenazi' – look again – 'AshkeNAZI.' interesting isn't it?"

This is what Icke is promoting: hardcore, Nazi-strength antisemitism. If you see people sharing Icke's stuff, this is what they are mixed up in. And yet Icke can threaten publications with legal action for calling him a Holocaust denier.

Conspiracism can often act as a conduit for ideas to be passed from the far right to far-left and whereas Icke has been in close proximity to far right isolationists in America and in Britain *Combat 18* – who once heralded his work – these days Icke's output has much more traction on the radical, libertarian left.

The most vitriol for my previous work on Icke came from the *Occupy Movement* which appears to be Icke's core fan base. The reaction on their Facebook page reveals that not only

does Icke have real traction in these circles but his supporters eschew much of his spiritual battery, particularly the reptilian meme. (To sum up, he may be wrong about the lizards but he's right about the 'Zionists') This is concurrent with what Icke is actually peddling. Scroll down his twitter feed. You won't see a lizard. Not even a scale.

What will you will find is the full battery of anti-Western, anti-American, anti-Zionist, antisemitic, anti-capitalist, anti-modernity, anti-EU, anti-Nato, pro-Assad, pro-Iran and pro-Putin propaganda.

In post-Brexit post-truth Britain, we write off fringe ideas at our peril. It would be unthinkable a decade ago for Icke to be this engaged in mainstream politics

but let's face it, the world has gone a bit Icke. His output for the last couple of years largely emanates from *Russia Today* with plenty of links back to Iranian state broadcaster Press TV. With these outlets being avowedly anti-western and a hotbed of conspiracy theory it is a natural fit for Icke paranoid fare.

These days of fake news and alternative facts have been a boon for cranks like Icke. On a recent video after the Manchester and London terror attacks he remarked at how pleasantly surprised and encouraged he was to see how many people were questioning the official version of events.

Right now, the conspiracists are winning.

## PROTOCOLS OF THE ELDER OF ZION

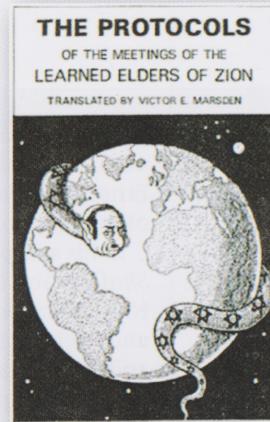
The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is a notorious piece of antisemitic propaganda. A forgery concocted by Czarist Russian secret police used to incite the Russian populace against its Jewish population. It tells the story of secret meetings where leading members of the Jewish community throughout the world convened to discuss the trivial matter of their secret plan to take over the world.

To accomplish this dastardly plot, they would infiltrate all political parties, take ownership of the press and media in order to control 'both sides' of the argument; they would even disseminate pornography alcohol and drugs to corrupt decent folk.

They would do this in order to spread dissension which would lead to revolution which in turn would lead to all-out war. Down on their luck the peoples of the world would then look to the Jews, now in control of everything, to lead them out of the darkness the evil Jews themselves had manufactured.

The publication of the *Protocols* in 1903 resulted in an intensification of pogroms that claimed the lives of thousands of Jews. By 1920, the *Protocols* had found their way to Germany and were quoted extensively by Adolf Hitler both in his speeches and in *Mein Kampf*.

In America, they were promoted most notably by Henry Ford – he had 500,000 copies printed – in *The International Jew: The World's Problem* making their way around the world to become the second



biggest selling book on the planet after the bible.

The results of this conspiracy theory were catastrophic, contributing significantly to the anti-Jewish agitation which led to one of humanity's most heinous crimes. It is the blueprint for all future world conspiracy theories and still widely believed all over the world today.

Unsurprisingly, antisemitism got a bad name in Europe after the Holocaust however by the 1950's the *Protocols* wended their way to Egypt and are now more popular than ever throughout the Arab world where anger at Israel brings a ready-made audience of millions for this most demonic of fictions. It is quoted in the Hamas covenant and pseudo-intellectual documentaries based on the *Protocols* are numerous.

It is a fusion of old European antisemitism and modern anti-Zionism. It makes up a large portion of Icke's current fare and is the most pernicious and intoxicating form of antisemitism in the modern world.

Thus, the *Protocols* that departed Europe, received a new veneer in the Arab world and are now being fed back into European culture.

As Icke said in 2014: "I go into the *Protocols* because they're very very important... don't let people tell you what to do and what to read. If you give them a read, you can get them on Amazon, read them dispassionately and look at the world and how it's been manipulated over the last hundred years. They mirror each other."

# The Richie Allen Show

By Marlon Solomon

FOR DISCERNING Ickeists, their daily fix is delivered via the internet radio programme *The Richie Allen Show*.

Available on numerous platforms, it boasts of being "Europe's No.1 independent radio station", has 50,000 subscribers and all episodes are available as podcasts and many are on YouTube.

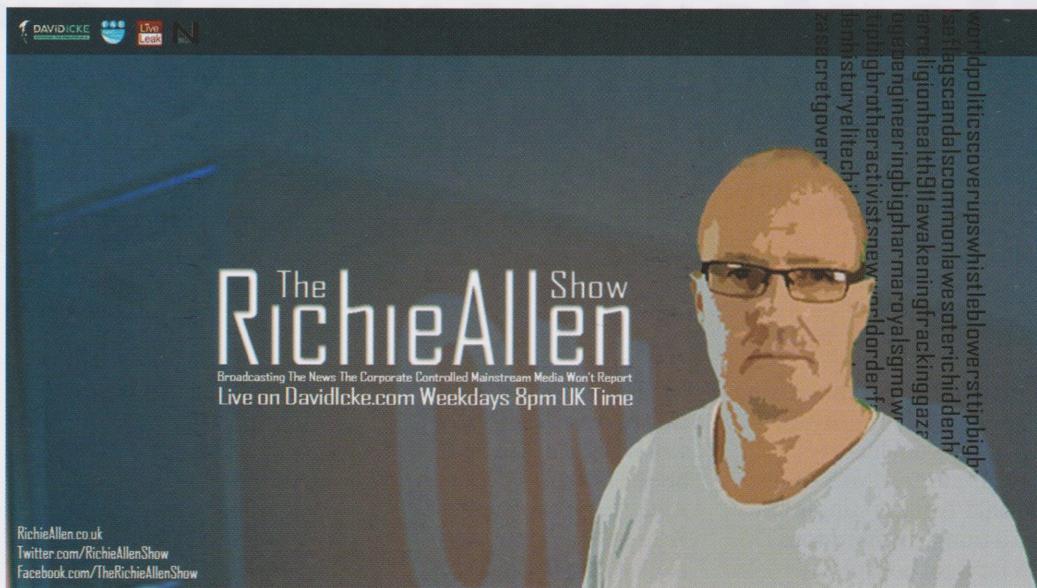
The show sprang from the embers of the now defunct internet TV show *The People's Voice* which Icke founded. Allen is Icke's protégé, plying his trade at *Fab Radio International* in Manchester and broadcasting six times a week.

On the show, nothing is taboo. As long as you are a conspiracist, you get an easy ride from the presenter who claims his guests come on to "debate" but you never hear anything approaching real debate.

To head off any potential criticism Allen often states: "I'm just asking questions" but, as this is Ickeism, many of the questions seem to be about Jews.

On the 27th January 2016, The Richie Allen show hosted "friend of the show" Nick Kollerstrom – one of Britain's leading and most extreme Holocaust deniers – to discuss his book *Breaking The Spell: Myth and Reality of the Holocaust*

Kollerstrom said: "The number of Jews who died I would put an absolute ceiling on 200,000... there's no trace of any extermination policy, no trace of any scorn or contempt towards, for example, Jews in the camps... I think Jewish people should very happy to hear that their



ancestors didn't go into big gas chambers and that the deadly Nazi cyanide chambers killed bugs and not people and they had clothing put into them and not human beings, they should be glad and happy to be told that. I would recommend that people discuss the function of the German labour camps without harping too much on the Jews... they were only a minority of the people there... it was quite a multicultural experience."

## 27 JANUARY IS HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY.

It is glaringly obvious from the interview that Kollerstrom is also a Nazi sympathiser. His statement that "the real Holocaust was perpetrated on the Germans" is a bit of a giveaway.

When half-challenged by Allen who put it to him that the Nazis "were bastards", Kollerstrom replied: "I prefer to look at the science." This was not followed up by the presenter.

Richie Allen and David Icke are currently supporting and hosting Glossop-based Alison Chablop who writes songs mocking Holocaust survivors and who is currently being prosecuted for hate speech.

You'll often hear Chablop on Aryan Radio but as Richie Allen is quick to point out, lest anyone think her an antisemite, her Holocaust denial ditties are simply "satirical songs."

The presenter himself is not as extreme a Holocaust denier as Chablop and Kollerstrom but he does practice his own version of "soft-core" denial or minimisation.

He says he believes the Nazis were "maniacal" but continues: "I have massive problems with the numbers (of Jewish dead) how they would have done it and I have massive problems with the teaching of the narrative to generations of children throughout the world"

On Holocaust Memorial Day, he described the plans for a permanent Holocaust memorial in London as "sinister". Allen also spends a disproportionate amount of time talking about alleged paedophilia within the Jewish community.

The American website *Right Wing Watch* commented on a recent episode in which political pundit Liz Crokin was a guest: "Recently, Crokin appeared on *The Richie Allen Show* to discuss the current Hollywood sexual

abuse scandals.

After nearly an hour of attempting to avoid the host's persistent efforts to link the scandals to Jews, Crokin eventually stopped resisting the antisemitic undercurrent of the discussion and found a way to discuss the supposed problem of "rampant" paedophilia within the Jewish community."

"I've also discovered," she went on, "that predators prey on children at Jewish camps. Now, it is interesting how paedophilia has been exposed within the Catholic Church but there hasn't been a huge scandal about the paedophilia that goes on within the Jewish community. We do know that the Jews control most of the mainstream media and Hollywood, so you're probably on to something with that."

The religious writer, Richard Bartholomew, has also noted about *The Richie Allen Show*: "Conspiracy-mongers from left and right are apparently equally welcome, although the vibe is more 'left alternative' than right-wing fringe."

Allen describes himself as a "former socialist" with a previous empathy towards the Socialist Workers Party. ●

# Thinking and the Contemporary Far Right

By Simon Murdoch

AS IS OFTEN the case during great political upheavals, we once again live in conspiratorial times. From Donald Trump's support for (and from) the notorious US far right conspiracy propagator Alex Jones of InfoWars fame to the rise in far right fake news purveyors like Breitbart, there is a resurgent attraction among some who feel deeply uncertain and politically powerless towards the convenient belief that they are in possession of the shadowy, simple truth that explains the tumultuous events around them.

The offer of easy, all-encompassing answers to difficult questions has long meant conspiracy theories have been a key path into the far right. Yet, while the core of these conspiracies remains constant, they are continually adapted to reflect contemporary events.

Moreover, as our digital age of ever more prevalent half-truths, increasingly passed off as facts, demonstrates, there are also great changes to the means by which they are spread. Hence, it is vital to explore changes in key conspiracy theories themselves as well as the media developments aiding the ability of these conspiracies to spread.

## CONTEMPORARY ISLAMOPHOBIA AND THE "EURABIA" CONSPIRACY

At its most conspiratorial, contemporary far right

Islamophobia is tied to a theory developed by the writer Bat Y'eor in her 2005 book *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis*. Described by Ye'or as a "geo-political reality", the Eurabia conspiracy argues that Europe is being "Arabised" and "Islamised", often with the unwitting collusion of Western governments through an unwillingness to tackle Islamism by encouraging diversity and multiculturalism.

The belief played an integral role in the anti-Muslim "Counter-Jihad" movement that gained traction post 9/11 and which was strongest in the same decade.

This conspiracy attracted supporters across Europe and the US at Counter-Jihad conferences, in Islamophobic street movements like the English Defence League and Pegida and, eventually, even in mainstream politics with the likes of Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán telling the Swiss magazine *Die Weltwoche* in November 2015 that "You cannot get around imagining that some kind of master plan is behind [the migrant crisis]."

On 22 July 2011, the Norwegian far right terrorist Anders Breivik killed 77 people, citing Bat Ye'or's book, as well as numerous others associated with the Counter-Jihad movement, in his 1,500-page manifesto released on the morning of the killings.

New groups continue the proliferation of conspiratorial

Islamophobia, for example the anti-Muslim youth movement, Generation Identity, launched in France in 2012.

Though utilising different terminology – especially French writer Renaud Camus' much debunked demographic notion of a "Great Replacement" of "indigenous" Europeans by Muslim migrants – their scaremongering interpretation of changes in the West overlaps with the Eurabia conspiracy and is indicative of the same yearning for simple explanations that conveniently confirm far right prejudices (prejudices that often are linked, including the belief that the "invasion" of Muslims is a concerted effort by Jews).

## CONSPIRATORIAL ANTISEMITISM AND THE CONTEMPORARY FAR RIGHT

Another area of the contemporary far right where conspiracy theories continue to hold sway is conspiratorial antisemitism.

This, of course, dates back centuries and, in its modern form, can be traced back to the forged antisemitic Russian text, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, published in 1903. Recent trends in the far right worryingly suggest conspiratorial antisemitism is both finding a new and younger online audience and is serving as a rallying point for international far right collaboration.

## THE ALTERNATIVE RIGHT

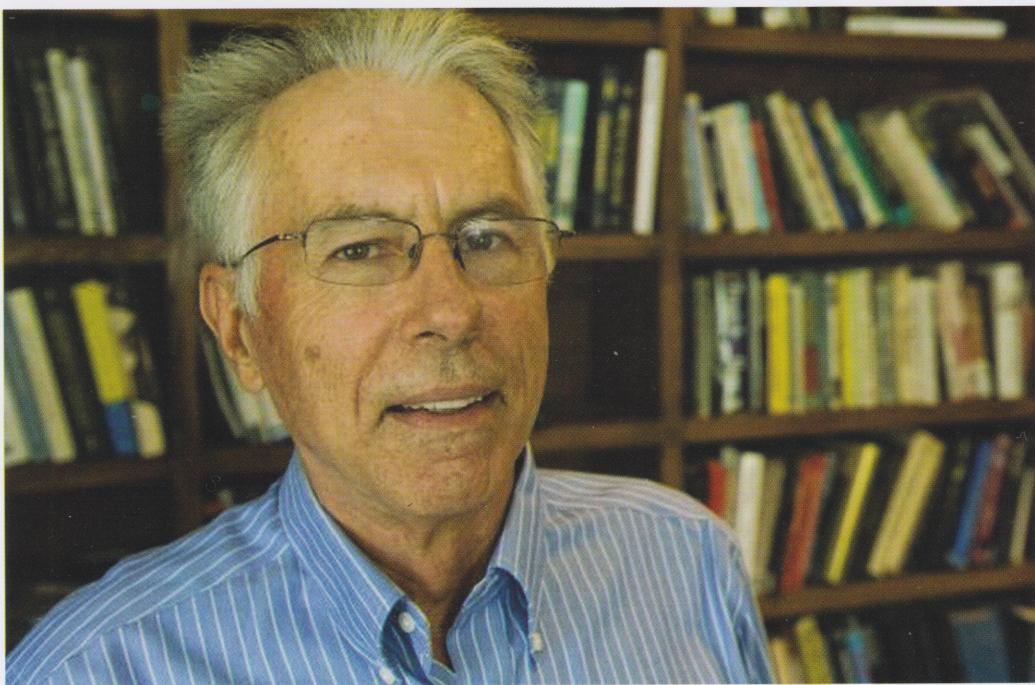
The alt-right's antisemitism is explicit and its conspiratorial dimension is more straightforward to identify. The alt-right's chief conspiratorial antisemitic influence is the former academic – and now central alt-right figure – Kevin MacDonald.

MacDonald developed his pseudoscientific conspiratorial antisemitism in three books in the 1990s, culminating in 1998's *Culture of Critique*. These texts promoted a racialised concept of Jews and understood Judaism as a "group evolutionary strategy" that manipulates larger populations in order to gain disproportionate access to resources.

This ties in with the alt-right's belief in the "White Genocide" conspiracy to turn white populations in majority white countries into racial minorities through immigration, diversity initiatives, support for access to abortion and other means (note the overlap with the "Great Replacement" conspiracy).

The conspiratorial antisemitism of the Western chauvinist alt-light is more implicit and exists despite its rejection of the alt-right's antisemitism.

Crucially, the alt-light believe there is a controlling, hegemonic left wing undermining the West by encouraging perceived "threats", especially Islam and



The alt-right's chief antisemitic conspiratorial influence is the former academic – and now central alt-right figure – Kevin MacDonald.

migrants. This stems from an explicit belief in "Cultural Marxism": the theory that the left has been engaged in a decades-long plot to undermine and overthrow traditional Western values by infiltrating cultural institutions and enforcing its ideas to promote progressive social movements.

This notion has existed in earlier forms. However, its modern version stems from the belief that the Frankfurt School – a group of mainly Jewish academics who fled from Nazi Germany to the US – advanced a "Cultural Marxist" agenda.

Moreover, the alt-light believes this has been aided by the "political correctness" of social justice movements stifling the free speech of those trying to halt its advance.

In turn, it believes this is because the unfettered "Cultural Marxist" agenda serves to benefit a class of "globalist elites" who want to erode the West.

#### THE SOROS CONSPIRACY

A broader trend of conspiratorial antisemitism is to be found in the far right's increasing vitriol towards the Jewish philanthropist George Soros.

Since the formation of his Open Society Foundation (OSF) in 1993, the Hungarian-

American billionaire has spent hundreds of millions of dollars in Hungary and other central European countries promoting democracy and defending minorities and, as a result, has frequently been the target of the far right.

More recently, following the 2015 refugee crisis, Soros has been a target of particular venom due to a belief that he is behind the influx of refugees coming into Europe.

Orbán's government even ran a poster campaign relying on a common conspiratorial antisemitic myth by depicting Soros as a puppet master with imagery evoking that used by the Nazis in the 1920s and 1930s.

#### MEDIA MANIPULATION AND CONSPIRACY THEORY

To understand the role conspiracy theories play in the modern far right, it is important to comprehend not just their evolving messages but also changes in the way these messages are being spread and received.

Use of the internet is altering the media landscape in a way that is far more accommodating to conspiracies. There is a shift away from traditional media sources and towards social networks.

At the same time, there has been a growth in the alternative, online far right

media sphere. These outlets rally fabricated, exaggerated and heavily biased "news" for the purpose of presenting vast bodies of supposed "evidence" to support their extreme views.

Simultaneously, they have positioned themselves as being "objective" by emphasising their anti-establishment status and playing on distrust towards mainstream media outlets by suggesting that the latter are in collusion with "liberal elites".

Moreover, academic research has shown that readers are more likely to trust news items that confirm their own beliefs or, possibly, what they hope to be true.

This can empower some who then drift from the margins to the core of the online conspiratorial far right. Ideas encountered at the edge of this alternative media world become more overtly extreme and – as consistent repetition of a one-sided and wholly negative perspective can cause an "illusory truth effect in which the repetition [...] increases perceptions of accuracy" – the stream of conspiracies on the likes of the nazi website, The Daily Stormer, are a powerful radicalising tool.

This online process is known as "red-pilling", seeing the "truth" about some area

of politics. It is increasingly well-documented and recent, high-profile US far right killings, including those by Elliot Rodger in 2014 and by Dylann Roof in 2016, have been linked to it.

Less extreme conspiratorial commentary that nevertheless preys on prejudices are frequently woven into "news" items, for example, exaggerated claims about crimes committed by migrants and refugees.

The combined recipe of increased reliance on social media for news, the sheer amount of information we are subjected to online and the speed of the news cycle, results in a situation in which many fall for these pernicious falsehoods.

While existing prejudice is key, even the most web-literate critical thinkers can be prone to this insofar as they defer to others when they do not have the time or expertise to research the news sufficiently.

#### THE FUTURE FOR THE CONSPIRATORIAL FAR RIGHT

The contemporary far right continues to employ largely recycled versions of traditional conspiracy theories through increasingly cooperating internationally and through using social media to disseminate them.

Combined with the glut of information online, this can leave those more susceptible to conspiracies in a dangerous situation as it is easier than ever to slip into a false understanding and then find supposedly supporting "evidence" to make their new favoured conspiracies sound more trustworthy.

To counteract this will not just require more empowering positions based on unity rather than division, it will also require collaboration between progressive movements. ●

# Bots and fake news prop Islamophobia online

**Patrik Hermansson reveals how Twitter bots, fake news and image manipulation are helping anti-Muslim activists spread their poisonous message online.**

ANTI-MUSLIM EXTREMISTS are successfully exploiting recent terror attacks to increase their reach and increase their audiences online according to a new mini-report HOPE not hate (Hnh) produced in December and from a survey of key social media accounts between March and November this year.

Monitoring these anti-Muslim social media accounts, the report revealed how even small events were amplified via an international network of activists to push the message that Islam is an “imminent threat” to the West. Those accounts we monitored increased, on average, by +117% between March and November this year.

The Hnh report also revealed how tweets from one of the world’s most prominent professional Islamophobes, Pamela Geller, are amplified by over 100 Twitter bots.

## TERROR EXPLOITATION

During a year in which there were four major terror attacks in the UK, former EDL leader Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (Tommy Robinson) more than doubled his Twitter following.

There was an astonishing tenfold increase in Jayda Fransen’s following on the platform, even before her violent videos (supposedly showing a Dutch youth, who was not a Muslim, beating up a white youth on crutches) were retweeted by the American President, Donald Trump, in November.

As the accounts we monitored grew, the data also showed short periods of rapid gains in followers for multiple anti-Muslim accounts. These bursts came in the hours after terror attacks in the UK. The professional Islamophobes have learned to exploit terror attacks for their own benefit, posting highly divisive and hateful content in the aftermath of each incident to exploit each atrocity to the full.

In the hours and days after the Manchester Islamist terrorist attack in which 22 people were murdered, several of the most prominent anti-Muslim accounts in the UK gained a significant number of followers in a short period of time.

Among these were the accounts of the failed UKIP leadership hopeful Anne Marie Waters (now running the far right For Britain party) and Britain First leader

## Screenshots of some of the worst tweets after London Bridge:

“#SadiqKhan if terrorism is just part of city life, pls explain how Tokyo has no jihad attacks? #LondonBridge #BoroughMarket #LondonFalling <https://t.co/Rhn66mq1We>”

1. Islam attacks London
2. Libs say nothing to do with Islam
3. Light a few candles
4. Invite more refugees
5. Blame Trump #LondonBridge <https://t.co/Glef8Tt04>”

“This is outrageous. Propaganda. Choreography by ‘news’ channels. <https://t.co/2hSsmVqgov>”

Paul Golding, in addition to Stephen Lennon and Jayda Fransen.

With each increase in Twitter followers comes a larger potential audience for every single tweet and, therefore, a magnified opportunity to influence public debate.

After the London Bridge attack on 3 June 2017, 32 of the top 100 most shared tweets about the attack showed negative sentiments against Muslims.

Notable among these were tweets shared by the largest anti-Muslim accounts, such as those run by Paul Joseph Watson of the conspiracy site Infowars; alt-right commentator Brittany Pettibone; Raheem Kassam of Breitbart London; and Canadian far right alternative media outlet Rebel Media, plus the Voice of Europe.

Tommy Robinson @TRobinsonNewEra

Follow

They used nail bombs at a kids concert in Manchester [twitter.com/TEN\\_GOP/status ...](https://twitter.com/TEN_GOP/status ...)

4:57 pm - 22 May 2017

8,524 Retweets 6,402 Likes

# elling



## COORDINATED ISLAMOPHOBIA

The exploitation of terror attacks to spread hatred is disturbing. However, as part of the Hnh report, we gave examples of coordinated anti-Muslim disinformation campaigns and manipulative tactics to spread anti-Muslim hatred.

Online forums and image boards coordinate anti-Muslim social media campaigns and spread wholly fabricated messages across social media. One example is the image of a woman in a headscarf on the day of the Westminster attack in March 2017.

The picture shows a Muslim woman walking, phone in her hand, past a group of people aiding one of the other victims of the attack.

It gained significant attention after a Twitter user called @Southlonestar claimed that the woman was indifferent to the suffering of others and that this was generally true for all Muslims.

This was completely untrue (both the woman and the photographer refute this). Other pictures in the series showed her noticeably distraught and shocked by what she has just seen.

In November 2017, @Southlonestar turned out to be one of 2,700 accounts that were handed over to US House Intelligence Committee by Twitter as a fake account created in Russia to influence UK and US politics.

Except for spreading anti-Muslim hate, it also spread messages before the US presidential election and was one of the accounts that tweeted pro-Brexit messages on the day of the EU referendum in June 2016.

No matter the circumstances behind the picture, it was quickly shared by several major far right and anti-Muslim accounts on Twitter, including those of alt-right leader Richard Spencer and Pamela Geller.

However, this image of the Muslim

woman would soon be used for even more nefarious purposes. The same evening it was distributed, the picture was appropriated by users on the /pol/ board on the online forum 4chan.

One user posted a picture where the woman was montaged into another setting with the simple comment next to it: "you know what to do", meaning that he wanted his fellow users to create image montages of the woman in other settings.

The intention was further clarified in a comment below. In it, the same user uploaded a file where the image of the woman had been cut out from the background in order to make it easier to montage into other pictures. The anonymous users who posted it wrote: "Go forth and make dank OC" ["Dank" means good or high quality and "OC" means Original Content].

In the comments that followed were hundreds of variations of the posted



image, most situating the woman next to atrocities of varying degrees. Clearly inspired by the original post or its derivatives, the pictures aimed to send the message that the woman (and Muslims overall) were unmoved by the suffering of others – or even enjoyed it.

Many of them were extreme and obvious parodies and did not leave the forum. In one she is seen walking past what looks like a Nazi extermination camp.

However, importantly some of these faked pictures *did not* stay on 4chan. Two weeks later, a manipulated image was spread on social media in Sweden, after four people were murdered by a car in a terrorist attack in Stockholm.

The image showed a paramedic walking between what looked like covered bodies while, in the background, the familiar silhouette of the woman on Westminster Bridge was superimposed. It was blurred to make it fit in with the

setting but undoubtedly was a cut-out from the Westminster photograph. It didn't get widespread reach as it was debunked quickly by Twitter users but a similar attempt was made again after the Manchester attack on 22 May 2017.

The same woman was again montaged into a picture of the place of the attack, making it look as if she was leaving the scene untouched, with victims lying behind her. This image was retweeted 52 times and liked 158 times.

#### INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION

Social media helps anti-Muslim activists to “crowdsource” anti-Muslim hate messages and propaganda. Local events can be spread to an audience around the world and collated into a bigger collection of anti-Muslim propaganda, serving to strengthen the impression that *Islam* is a grave threat despite the relatively few number of terror incidents.

A telling example of this phenomenon is how a picture of a McDonald's flier in Arabic, posted by Swedish anti-Muslim activist Jan Sjunnesson (@sjunnedotcom), was rehashed countless times and turned into articles in at least eight languages.

On 29 April 2017, Sjunnesson posted a picture of this McDonald's flier with the caption “McDonalds in Södertälje [a Swedish town]”. Despite being shown on a small Twitter account and being written in Swedish, it was spread quickly on Twitter and turned into articles on multiple anti-Muslim websites warning about the increasing influence of *sharia* law and the loss of identity in Europe and the US.

It was then used by sites such as fake news outlet The Gateway Pundit, the

File: batvsbanealoof.png (678 KB, 793x470)



you know what to do.

- >> **Anonymous** (ID: cDOue93z ) 03/23/17(Thu)00:26:34 No.117856103 ►  
>>117855926 (OP)  
Bump.
- >> **Anonymous** (ID: cDOue93z ) 03/23/17(Thu)00:27:30 No.117856247 ►  
>>117855926 (OP)  
Also any cutout of her, just for lazy goys?
- >> **Anonymous** (ID: edC4Wix4 ) 03/23/17(Thu)00:29:36 No.117856546 ►  
File: 1490209691579.png (262 KB, 393x616)  
Go forth and make dank OC.
- >> **Anonymous** (ID: cDOue93z ) 03/23/17(Thu)00:31:14 No.117856776 ►

nazi blog The Daily Stormer and the Russian Sputnik News to promote anti-Muslim ideas.

The Gateway Pundit wrote: “Women in Islamic clothing wander around Sweden and violent Muslim men beat and rape the Swedish natives. McDonald's is also doing their part to make sure that Sweden loses their language and identity by catering to their new demographic, Arabs.”

This highlights an important characteristic of social networks: that certain people are more important than others in grabbing widespread attention for a story.

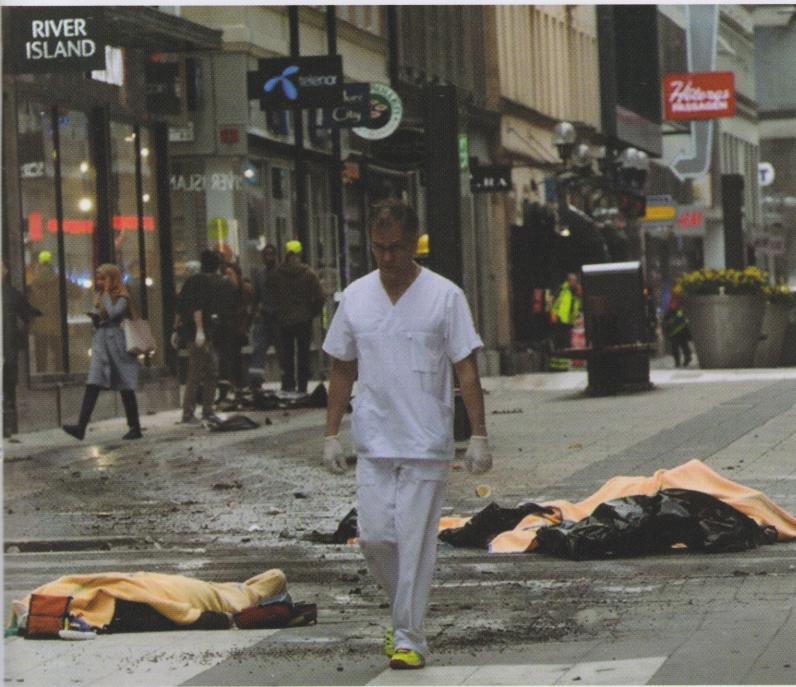
These users are often called “super spreaders”, a term for a most contagious patient borrowed from epidemiology.

“Super spreaders” don't necessarily have huge followings themselves but they are *more connected* than most and their connections, in turn, are well connected. But other characteristics, such as trust outside the network, are also relevant.

“Super spreaders” have much higher influence on social networks than other users as their message has a much higher probability of a large outreach. In this way, they act as gatekeepers to pushing messages “viral” on social media platforms.

Jan Sjunnesson is a notable example. He has 7,250 followers and tweets in Swedish. He is not a likely candidate to be featured on The Gateway Pundit and the truth is that he wasn't. But a much higher-profile user, Peter Imanuelsen (@PeterSweden7), certainly was.

Imanuelsen is an English language-using, far right, anti-Muslim hatemonger with roughly 10 times more followers than Sjunnesson on



Twitter. He is an associate of Voice of Europe and connected to at least six key anti-Muslim accounts. Peter Sweden reposted the image one day later and it was retweeted 4,141 times compared with the original 98.

Sjunnesson's message reached Imanuelsen, clearly a much better-connected user, and it received far greater attention as an article written in The Gateway Pundit (without crediting Sjunnesson).

#### PAMELA GELLER'S BOTS

As part of our investigation we revealed how tweets from one of the world's most prominent anti-Muslim activists, Pamela Geller, were amplified by 102 automated accounts.

Geller, who is banned from entering the UK and who called Barack Obama the "love child" of Malcolm X (and has said Islam is "an extreme ideology, the most radical and extreme ideology on the face of the earth") doubled the number of viewers to her blog, the Geller Report, to over two million people per month between July and October this year.

Automated accounts, known as "bots", are social media accounts that are part- or fully-controlled by software rather than a human. The idea is to shift debate and amplify messages at a much greater scale than would otherwise be possible if real people were broadcasting the message.

Bots can be effective when it is difficult to establish the true identity behind a social media profile, especially on Twitter, where there is very limited identifiable and verifiable information. There is much to be

gained from having a large reach on social media and there exists a market for inflating and expanding an account's social media reach.

It is estimated that between 9%–15% of all accounts on Twitter are automated. Based on Twitter's own data – claiming to have 330 million active accounts – this translates to between 29.7 million and 49.5 million bots active on the platform.

Geller's main Twitter account had 168K followers as of November 2017. The account is primarily used to drive traffic to her website, where articles about the danger of Islam are published 10-15 times a day. The bots not only amplify her message, they also draw more visitors to her website, generating more revenue (as it carries advertisements).

Over 100 accounts copy each tweet from Geller's account. They do not tweet anything or little else than Geller and do so within minutes of her posts. The tweets include a photo and link to Geller's website (as opposed to more common behaviour on Twitter, which is to retweet and, thereby, acknowledge the original source of the tweet).

These accounts also exhibit many bot-type characteristics. In addition to exclusively posting content with links to Geller's website, they do not mention any accounts, including Geller.

They are highly synchronised, which means they post the same content at almost exactly the same time. Furthermore, they often repeatedly post the very same tweet on the same day, making them incredibly active.

Take the Twitter account @TPartyWoman as an example. On 13 November, the account tweeted 34 links to Geller's site. Some of the tweets

were simply repetitions of previous tweets sent out minutes or hours earlier. The link to an article titled "Muslim construction workers attack Jewish preschool near Tel Aviv" was tweeted three times during the day.

[PICTURES: Screenshots of bots]

Social media platforms are now key fora for public debate. With increasing distrust of traditional media outlets, the potential influence of accounts with a large following is significant.

In this context, the steadily rising interest in anti-Muslim hate accounts is especially a matter for concern.

The rapid bursts of followers after terror attacks also shows that some of these professional agitators have found a formula that works.

It is a simple but effective tactic to exploit the public's fear at its weakest moment, right after a terror attack, and it presents a challenge for all progressive organisations.

The possibility to manipulate makes the problem worse. After the investigation into alleged manipulation of the US presidential election by Russia in 2016, and the attention given to the rise of fake news and fake social media accounts, it may seem that social media manipulation requires advanced technological knowledge and a large amount of funding.

This is a misconception that the investigation into Geller's bot network highlighted. There are easily accessible online markets where one can buy followers or social media accounts to be used as bots.

The use of these tools by anti-Muslim activists is a worrying trend that might only increase.

# NATIONAL FRONT S

The National Front (NF) continued its tradition of insulting Britain's war dead with its annual Remembrance Sunday march to the Cenotaph.

Despite being in its fiftieth year, large swathes of its tiny membership stayed away, confused and upset by yet another year of internal difficulties.

Leading the march was Kevin Bryan (chairman), Julie Lake (London Forum) and former EDL member Gil Gould (aka Joe Piper)

Bringing up the rear was veteran nazi Richard Edmonds, for whom the march had to stop twice to allow him to catch up with the leadership pack.

Although the NF is pitifully small, the ideology that binds the British far right was on parade.

These days, the NF cannot march without a helping hand from the London Forum whose leaders complained that the NF had again failed to provide a suitable colour party.



# PLITS

(left to right) Julie Lake,  
Kev Bryan and  
Gil Gould aka Joe Piper

Inserts:  
(top) Arkadiusz Rzepinski  
and Tomasz Jankun

(bottom) veteran nazi  
Richard Edmonds



# Sinking Defend Europe

**HOPE not hate broke the story of the far right “Defend Europe” campaign to disrupt humanitarian efforts to save migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean.**

**Here *Simon Murdoch* reflects on our efforts to counteract Defend Europe and on what it revealed about the contemporary political climate.**

The cool air that descended on the sweltering Sicilian coastal city of Catania as the last flickers of the day went out would become a familiar time marker for me here but, as my taxi from Fontanarossa airport wound through Catania's narrow streets, it was merely a new tone in a city with a rich and complex canvas.

Catania was chosen as the site of “Defend Europe”, the biggest campaign yet carried out by the far right “youth” movement Generation Identity (GI).

In its eyes, this picturesque Italian city was the epicentre of Europe's supposed impending collapse at the hands of “The Great Replacement”, the deranged belief that “indigenous” Europeans are being replaced by Muslim migrants and refugees crossing the Mediterranean into the continent. One can only imagine GI's joy when its activists arrived at their lodgings in Catania, just two doors down from the city's Baitun Nur mosque.

Yet, all Catania would turn out to be an epicentre for is a callous delusion of the contemporary far right and a symbol of the way in which the political climate is so open to its manipulation.

With the estimated 3,081 dead and missing persons who attempted to cross the sea for Europe in 2017 used to argue that NGOs are to blame for the ongoing situation – despite this notion having long been debunked – misinformation remains rife.

Indeed, speaking with the President of SOS Méditerranée Italy, Valeria Calendra, towards the end of my stay on the island, she explained that it had got to the point her organisation was engaging in efforts to speak directly to the public as “everybody speaks of the

ships, the migrants, but very little of the people that [do the NGO work]”. She wanted to make Catanians aware that migrants and refugees “have no other chance for their life”.

## **SINKING DEFEND EUROPE: HOPE NOT HATE FIGHTS BACK**

Defend Europe began in earnest in May 2017 when GI activists, accompanied by the Canadian vlogger Lauren Southern, blocked a ship used by the SOS Méditerranée NGO from leaving port.

Off the back of this stunt, GI raised over \$200,000, mainly from US crowd-funded donations, to charter a ship from Djibouti in East Africa. The intention was to meet it and travel, via the Suez Canal, into the Mediterranean to further disrupt the work of the NGO vessels.

HOPE not hate tracked the ship, renamed the ‘C-Star’ by Defend Europe, from late June before it had left and, from that day, until Defend Europe ceased, we undermined GI from all angles.

Before I left for Catania, we had already produced legal briefings and background briefings on Defend Europe for the search-and-rescue NGO vessels targeted by the far right groups and were providing information to members of these organisations.

We campaigned, and succeeded, in getting the then *Mail Online* journalist Katie Hopkins withdrawn from reporting sympathetically about Defend Europe from Catania (something the mainstream press were often guilty of).

We also contributed to the shutdown of various bank accounts used by activists involved with Defend Europe and our continued investigations exposed the criminal background of the owner of the C-Star as well as the possibility that

armed guards were aboard. Nevertheless, as the C-Star slowly edged closer towards Sicily, we knew that we needed to be on the ground.

## **YOUR PROBLEMS ARE JUST AROUND THE CORNER**

On Gagliani Street, not far from the throngs of tourists and locals enjoying Catania's baroque Piazza del Duomo, the Defend Europe team were holed up and agitated, desperately evading the increased attention of international journalists keen to know why the ship was yet to arrive after more than a week since they had been summoned to a press conference.

Defend Europe's team had little to do except flood social media with videos that barely hid its confusion over who and what had frustrated their best laid plans.

Yet their explanations lay a short walk away, as I sat in a café in the Piazza Curro, contacting the relevant Mediterranean port authorities to brief them on Defend Europe's intentions and liaising with partners.

Our efforts proved successful, with the ship being held at the Suez Canal and at the Turkish Cypriot port of Famagusta, while its owner and senior officers were held, ironically, for alleged people smuggling. Eventually, after weeks of costly delays and with little chance of their ship reaching Catania, GI's activists flew in secret to Cyprus to board the C-Star and begin their campaign.

Given the misinformation Defend Europe relied on, it was not enough to try and halt their ship. It was vital, too, to hear the voices of those they claimed to be speaking for and, crucially, the voices they were trying to silence.



In the Piazza Vincenzo Bellini, I got speaking to Ebrima, a Gambian migrant, who explained that he could not get work in Catania and that he and his friends were forced to sleep outside, something not lost on Catanians themselves.

Speaking to Karolina, a Polish-born waitress who had lived in Sicily for several years, she told me how "everybody thinks that we are helping them" but that "in reality there are no projects for them to work".

Migrants' and refugees' situations are always diverse though one common aspect is that their reception by many often erases these stories' complexities. Gambian migrants and refugees, for example, do not fit the prevalent media stories of refugees fleeing their homes due to Islamic State invasion or from outbreaks of civil war.

Similar ignorance has led to widespread Islamophobic attitudes towards migrants and refugees. Ebrima, who is Muslim, told me of his daily experience: "Many people are hating Muslims, even in Catania here. We can

see that when they are going to pray they turn the speakers down so that people don't hear".

Of course, these negative attitudes are not shared by all Europeans, let alone all Catanians. Fabrice, a student in Catania, told me that whilst he thinks Europe has to do more to control immigration, he is still pro-immigration and believes "we have to help [them] in any case".

Like so many Catanians I met, he had not heard of GI or Defend Europe. Yet, after I explained their campaign, he added with a mixture of defiance and despair that "we cannot feel afraid about terrorism [just] because they come here. [...] We cannot live with the thinking that they come here to kill us".

#### **SEEING IN BLACK AND WHITE**

My first impressions of Catania confirmed the picture GI paints as I found myself passing through an alleyway with graffiti declaring "refugees fuck off" before emerging into a square with armed military standing outside a

tourist attraction.

Such descriptions encourage the vision of a fearful Europe that Defend Europe exploits. It was how it was able to convince its followers that the disruption of lifesaving work was a "solution" to the deep complexity of mass migration into Europe.

Generation Identity and its activists are not political masterminds who seized a moment to "Defend Europe" from a group posing a threat. They are a movement whose prejudices put them in the grip of a callous delusion they announced to the world via a fawning international far right and a mainstream media chasing public attention at any cost.

Defend Europe was the work of political opportunists yet they missed one opportunity: namely, to learn something (and gain fellow-feeling) by listening to people like Ebrima: "My colour, your colour, it doesn't make sense. If I cut myself and you cut yourself, you won't see a black blood or a white blood, you'll see a red blood". ●

# No Justice for Chelsey

**In early November, EDL founder and current Rebel Media internet celebrity Stephen Lennon took it upon himself to call time on the far right's "Justice for Chelsey" campaign, writes Matthew Collins**

THE CAMPAIGN began in September 2016 when Chelsey Wright made a social media posting claiming she had been sexually assaulted by three Turkish men after leaving a pub in Sunderland city centre.

She alleged she was taken to a house and locked in a bedsit room before being released in the morning and making her way to her uncle's house to appeal for help. Wright's posting on social media was shared over 20,000 times.

Wright had begun the day in Sunderland with her mother and said that she could only recall having two drinks before waking up in distress in Hendon, a severely deprived area of Sunderland with a high migrant population.

Within hours, gangs linked to both the Sunderland Defence League (SDL) and North East Infidels (NEI), the rival far right factions that operate in the city and that the Wright family are linked to, had taken matters into their own hands.

Both gangs moved onto the streets in confrontational mood, whipping locals into a hostile frenzy, making threats to exact revenge on the accused men.

Chief protagonist at the time was SDL leader Billy Charlton, a heavy drinking and notorious fascist with links across the entire far right.

Ever inflammatory, Charlton went to the scene of the alleged assault calling for others to join him there while a police investigation was ongoing at the scene.

Six men, described in the *Daily Mail* as "a gang of migrants" from Syria, Iraq and Bahrain, were arrested and

then bailed. The bailing of the men, however, was seen by the far right as biased towards the migrants who were then moved for their own safety.

Wright continued to describe the men whom she alleges attacked her as "Turkish" but Charlton called for a demonstration, claiming the police had "totally ignored" the ethnicity of the men.

He also cited the Wright family, backed up by online comments by Wright's brother Kieron, asking him to organise a demonstration in Hendon for the next weekend. Charlton claimed his demonstration would also encompass the issue of "forced immigration" to Sunderland.

Sixty people subsequently attended the demonstration. Backed up by fascists swilling beer, there were a number of drink-fuelled confrontations and skirmishes, leading to four arrests and later, custodial sentences. "Justice for Chelsey" had been born.

To say from the outset that the case and issues surrounding it were vexed and troubling would be an understatement. It became quite clear very early on that Wright's plight was being used to fuel anti-immigrant sentiment. It was also abundantly clear that if the mother of three was claiming she had been drugged and gang raped, she should have proper access to support and justice.

As well as fundraising evenings and more demonstrations to support the alleged victim, the far right made a big noise to highlight the racial element.

News of the campaign spread across the British and

international far right; The British National Party (BNP), English Defence League (EDL), National Front (NF) and a host of smaller far right gangs all backed and joined various parts of the campaign.

Charlton was both the conduit and the block to accessing the family and the campaign. In part, this was due to a turf war he was having with the rival North East Infidels (NEI) gang for control of a number of drinking establishments in the city.

Finding his status elevated to that of family spokesperson, Charlton wrote to his supporters that "Anders Breivik action is needed" a clear reference to armed violence against migrants living in Sunderland.

Demonstrations, social events, a family holiday and a mass of online media continued with keeping the case a vexing and trying issue. Northumbria Police who were dealing with the investigation were themselves also targeted. Not only was a large amount of the reporting of the incident grossly inaccurate, exaggerated and loaded but the alleged victim's story kept changing.

There was also reason for that. Such was the worldwide web's clamour to tell Chelsey's story, it was hard to decipher what was her story and what was something expedient for the drunken and confrontational Charlton to say on her behalf.

Soon the rival North East Infidels were whispering that Charlton had been taking money out of the collection tins. So "concerned" were the NEI, that they also organised their own march and

demonstration in support of the Wright family.

Despite the squabbling and confusions, the "Justice for Chelsey" campaign continued to grow as did the anger and toxic environment developing around Charlton. One of his nearest supporters – who was to go on and denounce him over financial mismanagement of funds – was himself arrested (and cleared) on historic rape allegations.

In April of this year, there being no reduction in the anger, intrigue and confusion around the campaign, the police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) announced they were no longer pursuing the case.

The house at which the alleged assault took place was attacked and allegations made and widely broadcast that the alleged attackers had been "let off" for the sake of not upsetting the Muslim community.

So vicious was the campaign that Northumbria police took the unusual step of issuing a statement: "Reporting on social media about a complaint of a serious assault in Peel Street Hendon last year has grossly misrepresented the facts.

Northumbria Police fully and properly investigated the matter and ensured the victim was treated with compassion, expertly supported and kept updated.

"It is disappointing that the victim is now having to endure a situation where the case she was involved in is being subjected to entirely misleading reporting, based on unfounded information, via social-media outlets.

"This would seem to be a deliberate attempt to



undermine the very strong community-cohesion that currently exists across the force area and we urge our communities to see it for what it is."

That month, EDL founder Stephen Lennon (*aka* Tommy Robinson) took up the case. He agreed to lead a march, along with UKIP leadership hopeful Anne Marie Waters, through Sunderland to call for "Justice for Chelsey".

Despite being some seven months late on the scene, Lennon described his march as the "first" and it drew over 1,000 people onto the streets. Lennon and Rebel Media also launched a holiday appeal for Chelsey Wright, hired a lawyer to review the case and put an enormous billboard in the city centre.

Charlton was so incensed that he was not invited to the launch of the billboard and that Lennon had chosen to be photographed with Warren Faulkner, leader of the rival NEI gang, that he actually threatened to derail the campaign. He was both soothed and threatened with violence (a currency he knows only too well) to keep his mouth shut.

With Lennon, Rebel Media and Anne Marie Walters

threatening to exhaust more and more police resources on the case, the police issued a further statement, this time calling for Chelsey Wright to review her own evidence.

According to the *Sunderland Echo*: "...as part of their investigation, police viewed hours of CCTV, spoke to independent witnesses and carried out multiple forensic examinations including DNA testing. The Echo understands that the CCTV and forensic evidence gathered significantly undermined any assertion that the complainant had been kidnapped or drugged, or that multiple assailants had been involved in an attack of the nature being suggested online."

The *Echo* also weighed in, questioning why, in spite of the large amount of publicity in the city, marches, demonstrations and police investigations, Wright had specifically asked the paper not to use or print her name in anyway connected to the case. Lennon even did a series of interviews with Wright, describing her as a "Muslim gang rape survivor."

In July, Charlton had addressed some 200 people outside the Arizona nightclub

which had become the focus for much of the protests. Wright stayed away, instead drinking at a nearby pub which had become the unofficial headquarters for the campaign.

Again incensed, Charlton tried to claim the campaign was now over. Clearly it was not. Behind the scenes, fascists from London were threatening to go to Sunderland and attack Charlton over cash missing from another campaign.

There were also rumours that money collected by Charlton from a collection taken at the pub, had vanished. The campaign looked like it was dying, but there were still others now, desperate to keep the tension and temperature high.

In the same month that Charlton had tried to close the campaign down (no doubt to take some of the pressure off himself), Lennon decided to do a book signing in the city that ended in violent clashes between his fans and supporters of Celtic Football Club.

From there, the case went relatively quiet. Rebel Media had some internal difficulties that centred around what happened to monies they

collected for causes and Lennon managed to busy himself elsewhere.

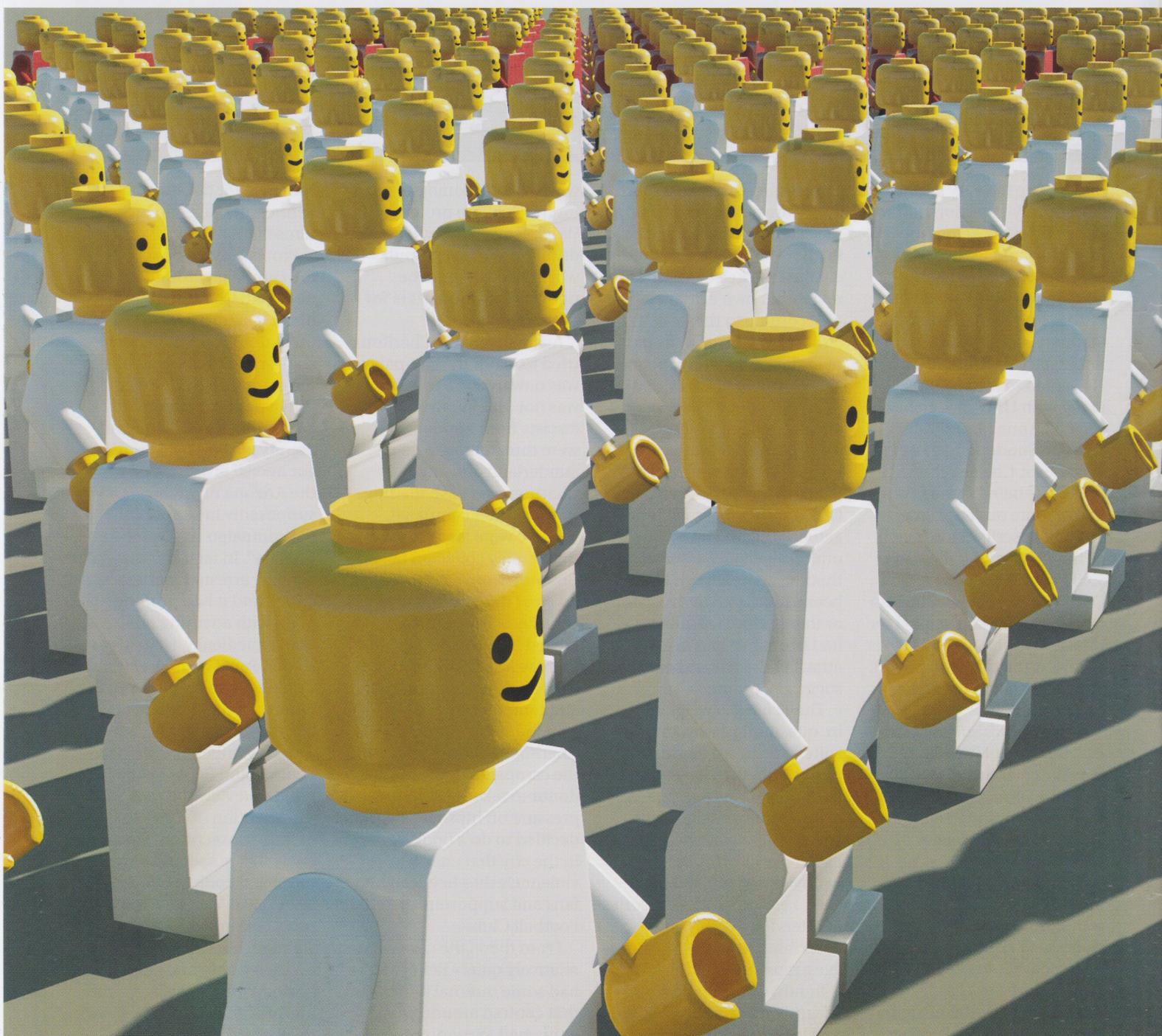
Protests dying down, the campaign ground to a near halt. Charlton found himself ostracised and all was quiet until 100 Britain First supporters tried to reignite the campaign in October.

In a pathetic attempt to gain publicity, Britain First deputy leader Jayda Fransen got herself arrested outside the Arizona nightclub, supposedly in support of the campaign of "Justice for Chelsey". In fact, she was actually arrested for breach of bail and it had nothing to do with anything other than expediency. Her party leader, Paul Golding, was out drinking with members of the family the night before and like the family, did not attend.

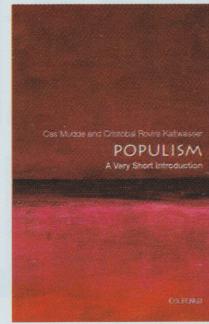
In November, the solicitor Lennon and Rebel Media had hired to review the case with the intention of a possible private prosecution, reported back. There seemed little more that could be done in the case. Were a private prosecution to be sought, he claimed, the CPS could take on such a case and close it down. Without saying so, the impression was that this was the most likely outcome. ●

# To Populism or Not To Populism

By Cas Mudde



Cas Mudde is an associate professor in the School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Georgia (USA) and a researcher in the Center for Research on Extremism at the University of Oslo (Norway). He is co-author of *Populism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2017).



POPULISM IS without a doubt the political buzzword of the 21<sup>st</sup> century so far. After decades of leading an almost dormant existence in the occasional history book about the US People's Party of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it entered the public debate in the last years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, only to dominate it in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

From the late Hugo Chávez in Venezuela to Marine Le Pen in France, populism is the defining feature in many contemporary political accounts.

But while populism was already the talk of the town in Latin America and Continental Europe before 2016, it only became the dominant prism of political debate in the UK and US last year with the shock results of Brexit and Donald Trump, respectively.

In most current accounts, Brexit and Trump are now heralded as the pinnacles of "populism," however defined, if defined at all. With populism declared all-powerful and omnipresent, it is no surprise that the term has come under critique.

It is accused of being "biased" and "political," rather than "objective" and "neutral," or simply as too broad and too vague, leading to facile statements like "if everything is populism then populism means nothing."

Having recently published "a very short introduction" to populism together

with my friend Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, I have little personal interest in tempering the importance of the concept. And yet, I do believe there is a need to do so. It is simplistic and wrong to argue that populism cannot be defined or that everything is populism.

Various definitions are fairly precise and exclude many more political actors than they include. This includes my own, which defines it as *an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups – "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite" – and argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people*.

Populism has undoubtedly played a role in the most important elections and referenda in recent years, including Brexit and Trump. However, in most cases it was not so much populism *per se* but a specific form of populism, often referred to as right-wing or radical right populism.

In the British EU Referendum, for example, left-wing populism played little to no role. While several prominent left-wing pundits had been floating a left-wing populist Brexit in 2015, inspired by the success of Syriza in Greece, "Lexit" died as fast as Syriza's anti-Memorandum stand.

Similarly, in the 2016 US presidential elections, the

alleged left-wing populist Bernie Sanders campaigned much more on a class-based interest program than a people-based normative one.

The various European elections of 2017 changed little to this trend. While right-wing populism was relevant in all major elections – Austria, France, Germany and the Netherlands – left-wing populism was only evident in the first round of the presidential elections in France, in the person of Jean-Luc Mélenchon.

While some (conservative) media were desperate to label the new French President Emmanuel Macron a (left-wing) populist, he is more a kind of belated Blairite, neither left-wing nor populist.

And 2017 also wasn't the year that "good populism" beat "bad populism," as Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte triumphantly declared after his election "victory" in March (he actually lost pretty big compared with the last elections), and the international media happily and uncritically copied.

Just as Sebastian Kurz did to much greater success in Austria in October, Rutte did not copy the populist radical right's populism, but their nativism, i.e. their xenophobic nationalism, in particularly directed towards Muslims and refugees. Because the real winner of 2016 and 2017 is nativism, not populism.

From the UK to the US, and from Austria to the

Netherlands, old and new governments, with or without the populist radical right, are beefing up their nativist approach and tightening up their immigration and integration policies. They are not targeting "the corrupt elite" but the "threatening immigrant", not allegedly defending "the pure people" but "the native people". Some of these policies are defended with slightly populist rhetoric, such as "listening to the voice of the people," but the core is nativism, not populism!

So, where does that leave populism? Is it indeed a meaningless concept? No, populism is part of contemporary politics and, in certain cases, an important part. For example, it is the inspiration – or at least excuse – for the fundamental attacks on the independence of the courts and media in Hungary, Poland, the UK, and the US.

But for the most important challengers to the political status quo today, the populist radical right, it is secondary to their key ideological component: nativism.

Consequently, we should only talk about populism in general, when we talk about various populist parties of left and right.

But when we speak specifically about populists of the radical right, we should describe them as populist radical right and focus on their key issues and policies, and label those correctly, as nationalist, not populist. ●

# ITALIAN FASH? FOLLOW THE CASH!

**From Luca Orfeo and Michele Zacchi**

"FOLLOW THE MONEY" – the old and golden rule of journalism is still relevant when talking about political parties and movements. Following the trail of money sustaining them often proves more insightful than poring over their arcane ideologies and public utterances by their key figures.

It is especially so in the case of CasaPound (CP) and Forza Nuova (FN), the two main fascist political organisations in today's Italy.

In the run-up to the national elections – scheduled for March 2018 – where both could break through the 3% ceiling introduced as part of new electoral law for the Lower Chamber, the left-wing weekly magazine *Espresso* has published the results a lengthy probe into the financial background of these fascist outfits, both of which emanate from the same source: Terza Posizione (TP), the leading fascist political party outside parliament during the 1970s.

After the bloodiest attacks from so-called "black terrorism" during the 1970s and 1980s – including the infamous Bologna Station bombing of 1981 in which fascists murdered 85 people – many of the fascist movement's key players managed to escape abroad to evade investigation, prosecution and conviction.

What proved to be catastrophic from the internal political perspective, condemning the extreme right-wing parties to virtual irrelevance on the national political panorama during the 1980s-1990s – TP was banned in 1980 and became extinct in 1982 – was extremely profitable, however, in terms of international relationships.

One time TP member, convicted fascist terrorist – and big friend of British nazi Nick Griffin – Roberto Fiore is Forza Nuova's boss while the so-called "essayist" Gabriele Adinolfi is now a member of Casa Pound.

They both escaped police attention in the early 1980s, Fiore high-tailing it to the UK and Adinolfi decamping to France. And there, their business lives took off.

Fiore became a millionaire running Gladio Consulting, Londoner, London Orange and Easy London, offering accommodation, other services and English-language courses to young Italians in London.

To be added to that complex web of enterprises are also Blackwood Properties Service, Decima, The Trust of St. Michael the Archangel, The St George Educational Trust, The Trust of St Mark the Evangelist, Immobiliare Brighton, Gruppo Italiano Servizi Postali, Mailnet Corporation, Italiana Servizi, Ics, Futura Vis, Rapida Vis, Comeritresa. All of these businesses are connected, in one way or the other, to Fiore.

Fiore now has an eye on Russia and has created Alexandrite, an association for Italian business people wanting to invest in Russia or move their firms there, with not much respect for the FN's own golden and much trumpeted slogan "Italy First". Coherence is in scarce supply in politics generally and, apparently, this applies to the self-styled "most patriotic Italian politician" as well.

The relationship with Russia, however, goes much deeper than simple business interest. The supposed "usual suspect" of international relations, Vladimir Putin, is the alleged mastermind behind all anti-establishment movements and parties in Europe (and beyond) although scant evidence to link the Russian leader *directly* to such activities has ever been published.

In Italy, the number of "anti-system" parties has multiplied in the past 25 years, counting in the populist MoVimento 5 Stelle, the racist Lega Nord and the outright fascist CasaPound and Forza Nuova.

Casa Pound is closely connected with France and its resident right-wing extremists of the Front National which also enjoys strong economic ties with Russian finance.

Carré français, Biribi, Badabing, Angelino Bros, Riwal Italia, Squadra Digitale, La Romané, Cassia Latina, are all firms based in Italy but the capital is all or partially French. All appear to have traceable fascist connections.

All also have proven links with Russia as recent reports from another major Italian media outlet, *La Stampa*, have indicated. It should come by no surprise that these outfits – MoVimento, Lega Nord, Casa Pound, Forza Nuova – are pushing for a change in EU-Russian relationships (for example, by asking for a softening of anti-Russia sanctions).

But using money as a leverage to influence the internal politics of other states is nothing new in international relationships. What is more worrisome is the degree to which such parties are gaining domestic momentum in the world of the angry, disappointed and frustrated low and lower-middle class.

This social group has expanded in number since the 2008 economic crash and represents a danger to the stability of democracy in Italy (and in Europe).

Winning its support is going to be the political challenge for all parties over the next decade. Its backing can be gained or bought (especially in Italy), but for that heaps of money are needed.

And CasaPound and Forza Nuova, through their financial connections with other anti-establishment political forces in other EU states and Russia, are setting up efficient methods to acquire it.

The internationalisation and professionalisation – from an economic point of view – of far right extremism is just one more step towards its mainstreaming in the political world. ●



Roberto Fiore Forza  
Nuova's boss



# The Bis the han

**From Martin Barić in Zagreb**

FOR SEVERAL years now, Bishop Vlado Košić, head of the Roman Catholic Diocese of the city of Sisak, has been the pre-eminent extreme-right activist of the Roman Catholic Church in Croatia. Although the top echelons of the Church in Croatia have been heavily politicised for at least 20 years –

(above) Bishop Vlado Košić, head of the Roman Catholic Diocese of the city of Sisak.  
(right) Kordić, convicted at The Hague Tribunal for his command responsibility in the massacre of more than 100 civilians.

# hop who kissed ds of a mass killer

ultra-conservative and overtly partisan – Košić can be described as a hardliner even by the Church's appalling standards.

Born in 1959, Košić became Bishop of Sisak in 2009 and came into the public eye, a few years later, with a slew of public appearances – to mobilise against the then-acting government led by the Social Democratic Party – in which he repeatedly accused the government of working against the will of the people.

This populist bent was not without clear ideological positioning on Košić's part, his advocacy going consistently in favour of the then-radicalising Croatian Democratic Union, emerging homophobic initiatives and increasing historical revisionism.

Unlike many members of the Roman Catholic clergy, he has publicly agitated for right-wing political candidates, using the term "enemies" to describe rivals with liberal or left-leaning political options.

All the while, too, he has presented himself as speaking on behalf of "Croatian patriots", endangered in their own country by the powers-that-be, invariably linked to an imagined and fanciful amalgam of communism, internationalism and liberalism.

On more than one occasion, he has challenged the constitutional principle of national minority representation in Parliament.

Košić is never above

attempting to influence daily politics and always does so by supporting the extreme right and historical revisionist tendencies. In 2014, one of his most prominent public appearances included welcoming and reverently kissing the hands of Dario Kordić, a war criminal convicted at The Hague Tribunal for his command responsibility in the massacre of more than 100 civilians, including women, children and the elderly, in the Bosnian hamlet of Ahmići in 1993.

Košić has since undertaken efforts to paint Kordić as a martyr for the Croatian cause, an unjustly convicted hero (in Košić's own terms, "a moral giant") who was only doing his part in the defence of Bosnian Croats.

In one of his more scandalous moves, in 2015, Košić signed a public petition to reintroduce the Nazi-collaborationist salute *For the Homeland – Ready* as an official salute of the Croatian Armed Forces, promoting the bogus claim that the salute is simply an historical one in an attempt to whitewash its Nazi connotations.

Even though other luminaries of the Catholic Church had also signed the petition, it was publicly derided as being merely a provocation.

However, Košić has since continued to promote the Nazi-collaborationist salute as legitimate, publicly endorsing its enshrinement in monuments to Croatia's 1990s wars secession from socialist Yugoslavia.

Košić has also gone on

record saying that the Nazi-collaborationist Ustaše movement was "not Fascist in nature", but represented instead "organized military action in defending the Croatian state, using both acceptable and unacceptable means" – the "unacceptable" ones being, ostensibly, the organised extermination of Jews, Serbs and Roma.

Further, Košić publicly supports attempts to disprove (or at least severely downplay) the existence of the well-documented Ustaše Jasenovac death camp, insisting on the historical revisionist claim that the death camp was merely a labour camp where no executions took place until Tito's Communists came to power in 1945.

This brand of whitewashing WWII history has become prominent in recent years with a number of self-styled historians claiming to have definite proof that no extermination camp in Jasenovac ever existed.

Meanwhile, official sources on Jasenovac have a well-nigh comprehensive list of names of over 80,000 documented victims, the vast majority of them Serb, Jewish or Roma and as many as 14,000 of them children!

On top of his regular nationalist stances, Košić has also attempted to pick up the anti-migrant cause, painting Middle-Eastern migrants and refugees as "bearers of violence against Christian Europe" in one of his public homilies.

Recently, he has continued to be publicly active in promoting the idea that higher standards

of combating violence against women, as envisioned by the *Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*, represents an artefact of "gender ideology" and a threat to national identity.

In October 2017, Košić was appointed Head of the Council for the Doctrine of Faith of the Croatian Bishops' Conference that sent out the message that the clerical hierarchy overall is committed to his political programme of radical historic revisionism, extreme nationalism and opposition to the rights of minority groups.

The political pragmatism of the right-of-centre government, as well as Košić's own autonomy as bishop of a diocese, ensure his further security in publicly promoting his views, for which he increasingly cites Poland as "an example of a Christian nation".

Košić's public work represents a low point of the Croatian Catholic hierarchy's already troubling political activism. However, it is well known that his views are not his alone – he has merely chosen to be the mouthpiece for the most ideologically appalling attitudes held by many other Church luminaries.

After all, many of them both heavily oppose any emancipatory social tendencies and harbour thinly-veiled sympathies for the Croatian Nazi puppet state in which the Catholic Church was wholly complicit and highly revered.

# NATO and the Forest Brothers – movie madness at its worst

**Paul Stock reports on NATO's latest blockbuster**

In NATO's latest blockbuster released on July 11 this year, Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian partisans – "the woodmen" who fought against the Soviets in the 1940s–1950s to gain independence – can be seen scurrying around Baltic forests for a full eight minutes, in full German uniforms, to full special effects, saving the lives of their fellow citizens from bloodthirsty Russians and protecting their homeland to the death... all on a You Tube screen near you!

As Canadian journalist Scott Taylor has pointed out: "The theme of this new piece of NATO propaganda is to liken the resolve and heroism of these historical Forest Brothers to the current special forces units of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia... The timing of the release of the NATO short film is no doubt aimed at magnifying the threat posed by Russia" which, on 14 September 2017, conducted, for a week, its largest military exercises since the end of the Cold War.

Russia's recent *Zapad* exercises may have been provocative but a NATO film that unwittingly glorifies Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian "partisans" is equally hard to stomach, particularly when one considers that the Forest Brothers in the film are heralded as heroic, ideological fighters fighting for independence against the evil Soviets.

Apparently simple, common people who loved their country so much they chose to fight to the death for it, simple, common people whom the Lithuanian and Latvian governments have, in recent years, spent a small fortune in Euros in glorifying and, at the same time, threatening to imprison, for between two to five years, anyone who dares to say otherwise.

Some of these same simple, common people just happened to be some of the main agents of the Holocaust, leading lights within the Arājs Kommando killing unit that annihilated nearly 67,000 Latvian Jews, 90% of Latvia's pre-war Jewish population in 1941–1942 and, in 1943, joined the Latvian SS! As Dr

Efraim Zuroff, chief Nazi hunter at the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, has stated: "Several prominent commanders were involved in the murder of Jews during the Holocaust. In fact, part of the motivation of some of the Forest Brothers to join, was apparently to avoid prosecution by the Soviets for their crimes against civilians during the war. Another complaint against them was that in certain cases they mistreated their own people (ethnic Lithuanians)."

As much as Baltic countries would like to think that the Russians are in sinful alliance with Morgoth, it should be remembered that during the Second World War, the Russians – in the shape of the Soviet Union – were indeed in alliance with the British, Americans and French fighting Hitler and his genocidal troops.

If Soviet Russia had not fought in the war and taken such immense human losses, it is highly unlikely that the Baltic States that heartily collaborated with Hitler and his murderous hordes would even exist today.

Historians know very well of the Nazis' plans to do away with the Baltic peoples after the much planned-for "final victory". There would have been no *Latvia, Lithuania or Estonia* to become independent in 1991!

The fight for historic truth and unravelling of myth from memory is, in the Baltics, an especially upward struggle, often reaching Orwellian proportions with many casualties and numerous court cases.

According to the Russian Military Historical Society, from 1944–1956 the 40,000-odd Lithuanian patriots killed 25,000 people including 1,000 children. At least 80% were Lithuanians themselves. A number of these "heroes" have, from what historical records reveal, far from noble pasts but still street names, plaques and honours have been bestowed upon them: Antanas Baltūsis-Žvejas, Juozas Barzda, Konstantinas Liuberskis-Žvainys, Vincas Kaulinis-Miškinis, Juozas Krikštaponis

(Krištaponis), Jonas Noreika, Adolfas Ramanauskas Vanagas, Juozas Šibaila, Sergijus Staniškis Litas, Vylius-Vėlavičius and Jonas Žemaitis to name only a few.

In the Second World War, 220,000 or 96.4% of Lithuanian Jews were slaughtered, the largest percentage in Europe, because of the massive voluntary participation of the "patriots", members of the Forest Brothers and the Lithuanian Activist Front.

However, in 2011–2012, the Lithuanian government publicly honoured many of these so-called patriots.

The situation in neighbouring Latvia was, and is, no different. Since 1998, each and every 16 March, in the capital, Riga, the few that are left of the 87,550 Latvian Waffen SS members are annually greeted with flowers by up to 3,000 Latvians and their deluded, international, ultra-nationalist friends.

They insist that the Latvian Waffen SS Legion, around a third of who were volunteers not conscripts, could not have played a role in the Holocaust as it was not officially formed until later in the war (1943).

However, substantial evidence including a series of personal accounts and confirmation emerging from the trial of Adolf Eichmann, support the accusation that unknown numbers of Latvian Waffen SS soldiers acting as auxiliary police were involved in the murder of Jews between 1941 and 1942.

Nearly 67,000 Jews or 95.6 percent of Latvia's pre-war Jewish population were done to death by notorious ghetto executioners like Arnold Točs and Bruno Tone, commanders in the Arājs Kommando and then, later, members of the Latvian version of the Forest Brothers, the Wildkatze SS Jagdverband Ost.

Its leader, Boris Jankavs, was, only a few years previously, in the Arājs Kommando and was a close friend of Rumbula and Babi Yar mass murderer and SS Obergruppenführer Friedrich Jeckeln of "sardine method" – in which people were shot in "neat" layers – killing fame.



Jeckeln's murderous career had got off to an early start in the Third Reich when, soon after the handover of power to Hitler, he was personally involved in killing political opponents and anti-fascists, especially Communists, Social Democrats and trades unionists.

From 1941 to 1945, the Nazis and their Latvian accomplices established 46 prisons, 23 concentration camps and 18 Jewish ghettos in Latvia alone, killing 313,798 civilians, 39,835 children and 330,032 Soviet prisoners of war.

After the war, these "heroes" of the Baltic SS divisions fled into the woods and continued their killing sprees. The last units of the Forest Brothers were only finally wiped out in the 1950's.

At the same time, the Cold War raged and Latvian SS men who had not been captured by the Red Army found easy refuge in the UK, America and Canada, often their ability to offer an invaluable insider's guide to Soviet Russia getting them off the legal hook.

Suddenly and shamefully, the Latvian and Estonian SS were declared by the US Displaced Persons Commission in

September 1950 as being "separate and distinct" from the other 35 SS divisions! However, let us not forget that of the 900,000 members of the Waffen SS members, over 87,000 had been Latvians, the largest foreign contingent.

These Latvians were mainly placed in the 15th Infantry Division, the most decorated non-German Waffen SS unit and a third of them had volunteered to aid and abet the Nazis. None have been brought to justice since the Baltic States obtained their independence in the early 1990s.

Perhaps it is therefore no surprise that, as another Cold War looms, the Baltic states should once more attempt to rewrite history and NATO and the West should again turn a blind eye.

However, for those who wish to know, in the first verdict that was made regarding the SS, the verdict of the Nuremberg trials of 30 September 1946, it was crystal clear: there were no heroes among the SS, there were no divisions that were deemed better than others but rather the SS as a whole was defined as a "criminal organisation."

Stated the Nuremberg judgment and worth quoting at length: *"Much of the evidence and the argument has centred around the question of whether membership in these organizations was or was not voluntary; in this case, it seems to the Tribunal to be quite beside the point. For this alleged criminal organization has one characteristic, a controlling one, which sharply distinguishes it....When an individual became a member of the SS, for instance, he did so voluntarily or otherwise, but certainly with the knowledge that he was joining something. Many of these men have made a mockery of the soldier's oath of obedience to military orders. When it suits their defense they say they had to obey; when, confronted with Hitler's brutal crimes, which are shown to have been within their general knowledge, they say they disobeyed. The truth is that they actively participated in all these crimes, or sat silent and acquiescent, witnessing the commission of crimes on a scale larger and more shocking than the world has ever had the misfortune to know. This must be said."*

# Viktor Orbán – Hate Merchant

**Bernard Rorke analyses Hungarian premier Viktor Orbán's increasingly toxic political vendettas**

VIKTOR ORBÁN'S latest government-sponsored anti-George Soros hate campaign in Hungary is a mendacious "public consultation" designed to spread fear and hate among the electorate.

It is yet another signal that the challenge to democracy in Hungary comes not from the assorted goons of the far right in their comic-opera pick'n'mix paramilitary uniforms but from the prime minister himself, his oligarchic clansmen and the cluster of loyal party henchmen that do his bidding without demur.

In late September, people from the small Hungarian village of Ócsény subjected local guesthouse owner Zoltán Fenyvesi to violence and intimidation – including slashed tyres and threats of decapitation – after he offered to host refugee children for short vacations.

Days later, commenting on the incident, Orbán said: "I cannot find anything wrong in this. People do not want to accept migrants. They do not want to accept them into their country and they do not want to accept them into their village. They have been lied to so many times about migrants that they do not believe that only children would come."

More shocking than the incident itself is the appalling spectacle of a prime minister condoning violence

against those who would offer hospitality to refugee children.

Ócsény mayor János Fülöp, who resigned soon after, told the *Budapest Beacon* how villagers had described refugees as animals and terrorists intent on blowing things up and raping children.

In his eleven years as mayor he remembered only peace and quiet: "No one spat on or cursed each other. That's finished now," because the hatred of refugees has fundamentally changed the place.

This ugly racism is the product of two years of relentless official anti-refugee propaganda by state-controlled media. Orbán's hate campaigns have led to rising xenophobia and continue to feed a growing appetite for conspiracy theories where philanthropist George Soros is purported to head a hidden cast of powerful and rootless cosmopolitans, bent on destroying Hungary.

Orbán's illiberal, nativist brand of politics and his party's capture of the state have won him the admiration of far right extremists across Europe. One thing that became clear to us covering the extremist Stop Operation Soros! event last March – when we interviewed visitors like the Swedish alt-right poster boy Daniel Friberg, Knights Templar supremo

James Dowson and clapped-out BNP has-been Nick Griffin – was that nobody had a good word to say about the fascist Jobbik party but all were effusive in their praise of Orbán.

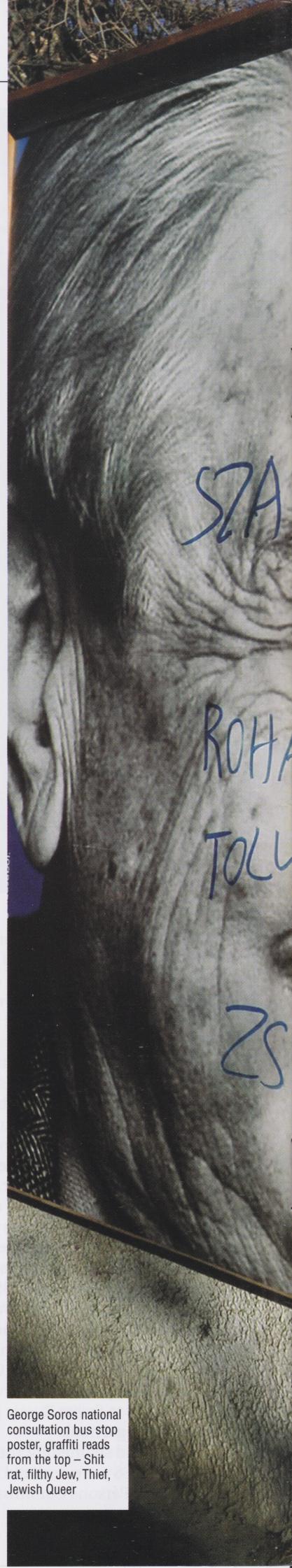
In particular, they lauded him as a "strong leader" who understood the threat of 'Islamicisation' and what was at stake for European civilisation.

They were very taken with Orbán's state of the nation address, in February 2017, when he proclaimed that Hungary "shall let in true refugees: Germans, Dutch, French, and Italians, terrified politicians and journalists who here in Hungary want to find the Europe they have lost in their homelands."

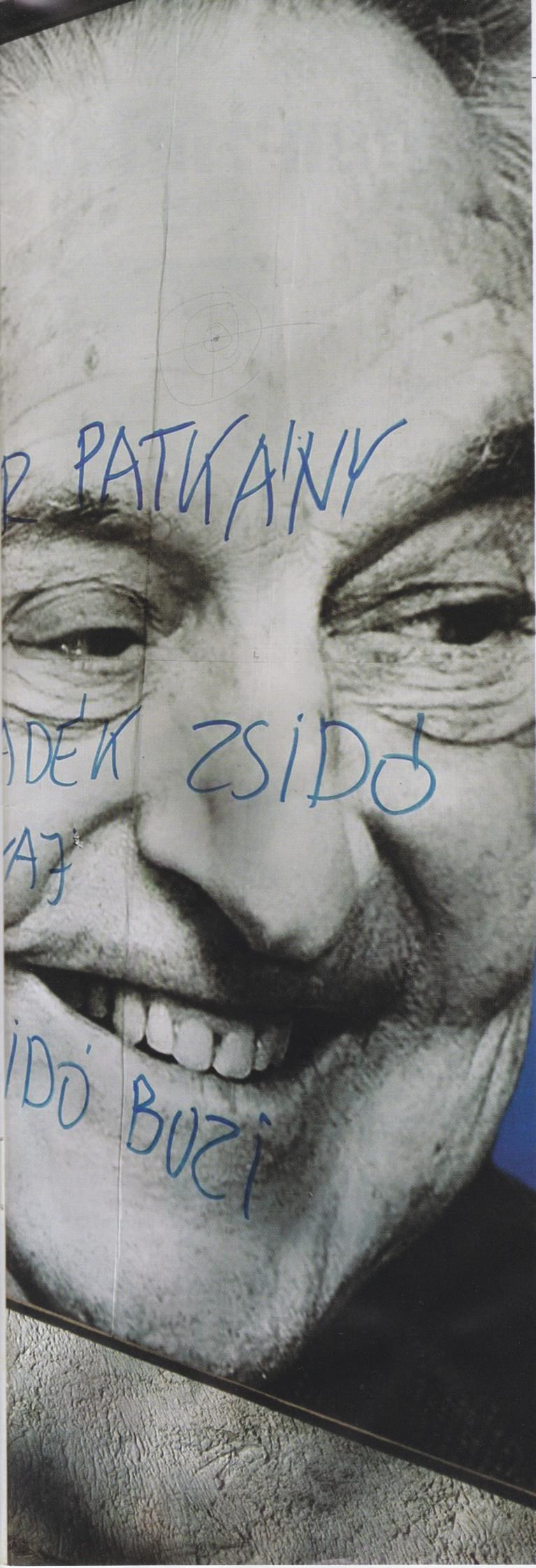
Orbán also railed against the transnational empire of Hungarian-US billionaire philanthropist Soros and spoke of the need "to take up arms against increasingly strong activists from international organisations".

The insignificance of this gathering of far right "identitarian" (and fascist) loons bleating about George Soros being one of the "biggest threats to the survival of our people and our civilisation" quickly became apparent in the face of the government's own official massive, nation-wide anti-Soros campaign.

The springtime billboard campaign was deemed



George Soros national consultation bus stop poster, graffiti reads from the top – Shit rat, filthy Jew, Thief, Jewish Queer



fascistic and antisemitic by critics and attracted a degree of international opprobrium.

Along every major highway, in metro stations and at tram stops, large government propaganda posters featured a grinning Soros, claiming that the “world’s most influential billionaire” supports illegal immigration, open borders and the ruination of Hungary and sported the giant caption “Let’s not let Soros have the last laugh!”

Activists from the anti-racist Együtt (Together) party took direct action by publicly tearing down the posters and András Heisler, president of the Hungarian Jewish organization Mazsihisz, condemned the government campaign as poisonous, harmful to the whole of Hungary, and called for an immediate halt to the campaign and the removal of the posters “from our streets and squares.”

Between the spring and autumn anti-Soros campaigns, Orbán’s henchmen never let up. In September, the Speaker of the Parliament, László Kövér, warned of “hot times” ahead with imminent Soros-sponsored street riots and claimed that “Soros activists” were primed to do the “dirty work” of the opposition parties in the run-up to the 2018 elections to create “an atmosphere in which civil war psychosis overwrites everything else.”

Launching the second anti-Soros campaign, Orbán announced on radio: “George Soros has bought people and organisations, and Brussels is under his influence; they want to demolish the fence, allow millions of immigrants into Europe, then distribute them using a mandatory mechanism; and they want to punish those who do not comply”. Orbán declared: “We have revealed the fact that a Soros Plan exists” and “we have placed it at the centre of political life”.

Much of the international media coverage on Hungary overlooks the wildly

aggressive irrationality of everyday Fidesz (Orbán’s party) propaganda and rhetoric that includes bizarre and outlandish interventions variously attributing the fictitious “Soros plan” to the work of Satan and the Freemasons.

The constant stream of lies, and the general crudity, vulgarity and incivility that characterise government communications serve to conjure up fear and uncertainty to justify a permanent state of exception, to defend the nation from what Orbán describes as “covert foreign attempts to exert influence” and the work of paid activists, those “large predators swimming in the water...the transnational empire of George Soros.”

Orbán’s attacks on civil society have intensified, the slanders and abuse continue unabated, with independent journalists now being singled out for official harassment.

Recently he told radio listeners that NGO people “are on the payroll, they transport migrants, they stand on the wrong side, they want a mixed population in Europe ... they want to harm Hungarian people.”

Orbán raised the stakes still further on 27 October by announcing that he had instructed the country’s spy agencies to investigate and expose the activities of the network of groups and individuals supported by Soros that were seeking to have Hungary “condemned, stigmatised and forced to change its migration policy”.

This latest xenophobic anti-Soros campaign – combined with the attacks on civil society and press freedom and the attempts to shut down the Central European University – make it clear that the real threat to democracy in Hungary comes not from the heavies of the far right.

The real threat comes from Viktor Orbán and his relentless hate mongering in his quest to fashion an authoritarian, ethnically homogenous, Christian-national state.

# 'Mohammed's Koran': Infant

By Julian Bond

**MOHAMMED'S KORAN** is written by renowned Islamophobe and former leader of the English Defence League, Tommy Robinson, alongside Peter McLoughlin. This is not really a book about the Qur'an and it isn't going to help you understand it.

The co-authors have massive chips on their shoulders, as they make clear in their book. They tell us that those in positions of power are lying to us about Islam. They have a huge expectation (or claim to have one) that the leaders of British society should be informing/ educating us about Islam.

This is the language of the playground and social media. It is very familiar to those of us who are peace activists with an online presence and involved in both virtual and real peace campaigning. The authors are not interested in peace which depends on being constructive.

This book is offered as an antidote to the "lies" being told about Islam by giving us fear and death instead. It is not a book that seeks to educate or create understanding, whatever the authors may claim, as is clear from the front cover.

It has been designed to create as much fear, hate, distrust and confrontation as possible.

The Arabic writing on a black background on the cover is the *shahadah* ('testimony'), the Islamic declaration of faith: "There is none worthy of worship except God and Muhammad is God's Messenger." It is not a declaration of war or a threat.

However, a non-Muslim reader will look at it and

see the flag of ISIS. Of course, the authors never tell us the meaning of these Arabic words. This imagery is accompanied below by a sword dripping blood, another reference to ISIS. It is infantile.

The cover announces that it is about Muslims – "Why Muslims Kill for Islam" – not ISIS, not extremists, not terrorists.

It would be possible to engage with a book that had the title "Why some Muslims Kill for Islam" or "Why Extremist Muslims Kill for Islam."

But no, this is about fearing for one's safety from all Muslims. It is fine for anyone to write about the threat of extremism (though it is not the biggest threat to life in Western societies) and terrorism. Instead, it is heading towards hostile confrontation. It has, without reservation, chosen the "Dark Side".

Yet, for all that the authors are hostile, even more so are they ridiculous. In its aim to be deadly serious, its nonsense is almost humorous. Thus, in the Introduction (p.7), we read (in bold, this book has more bold text than any other book in the history of publishing!): "If you are a Muslim, please put this book down. We do not wish you to become a killer because this book leads you to understand the doctrines and history of Islam more thoroughly."

It makes me want to give this book to Muslim friends so that they can read it and say "Sorry Tommy, we're still peaceful and you don't know what you're talking about".

The back cover gives more insight into the nature of

the book stating that the "educated elite ... have been actively deceiving the rest of the population [about Islam]". The authors are not happy because they want to be the ones who are deceiving us about Islam.

The authors do ISIS' work for it by telling us that "Islam offers two options: submit or die". The authors are not to be trusted. They are extremists. The book itself opens by stating that Islam is a religion of war and that this "truth" has been suppressed. We read that it is the "elite" who marginalise what they describe as "explicit articulations of Islam" by describing those who do so as Islamist extremists.

The authors share the outlook that Islamism is not distinct from Islam. They have no problem in telling us what Islam is even though they stand against it. Of course, this leads on to "your child" being "deceived at school" (p.8).

The authors want to tell us that Islam is monolithic and have no space to admit that Muslims do not agree with everything that scholars in the past have written or that the world has changed a lot since then.

The authors then take to task Muslims who denounce atrocities and acts of terrorism as, for them, the views of ancient scholars outweigh contemporary public statements.

Who knows why the authors cannot see this? Muslims are standing up to violent interpretations and do not agree with all that scholars said in the past, even if they translate them.

McLoughlin and Robinson could engage with Islam



constructively, as they are on the same side, but no. The "jihadis" supposed reward in Paradise is another important building block for the authors. Yet, for the vast majority of Muslims who are actually following Islam, it is a mark of extremism.

The "genius" of this book is the authors' belief that they can solve the problem of people having wrong ideas about Islam by the simple, and unoriginal, technique of re-ordering the Qur'an.

Have you ever come across a book which worked better when its chapters were re-organised? Actually, the Bible comes to mind with its re-ordering of the books of the Hebrew Scriptures to create a more helpful sequence. This is exactly how a text can be misrepresented. Now ask yourself why Muslims never re-organised their scriptures.

# ile, hateful and nonsensical



Even those who compiled the Bible, with a sense of the superiority of the New Testament, did not put it before the Old Testament.

Robinson and McLaughlin tie themselves in this knot because they think that the Qur'an has been "encrypted" (yes, this is *their* word) and is a book which apparently needs to be "deciphered" (p.12). *Or they could just read it!*

Of course, they take great delight in being wise enough to "decipher" it and have taken on this task because no one else was willing, or perhaps brave, enough (as they might see it) to do so – "this is a job which in normal life our society delegates to an elite class" (p.12).

However, the normal life of most British people (in all our diversity) does not recognise society delegating anything to an elite class that we might

consider looking up to, we don't live in the Middle Ages.

And, of course, the Qur'an is in fact addressed to everyone, not the "elite". Make no mistake, this is a distortion of the Qur'an for the impatient and intolerant.

When they say, "Commands from Allah [yes, they deliberately want to make God seem alien and foreign] to kill the unbelievers are what dominate the later part of the [Qur'an]...these commands cancel out those few earlier commands which might suggest that Islam is ... peaceful" (p.13), they are highlighting how they have misused the text.

In its usual order, the Qur'an is specifically organised to stop people using it as a book of war. Read with understanding, instead of prejudice, the early verses of Surah 2 condemn

the activities of Daesh, Al-Qaeda and Boko Haram. Interpreting the Qur'an as a manual for killing is a mark of the extremist so it is no surprise that the authors interpret it in the same way as Daesh.

We are no longer in the real world of history and religion but of conspiracy. Personally, I would be embarrassed to write an ignorant book which advertises its ignorance by saying that "the book [Qur'an] makes almost no sense" (p.14).

This is a statement truer of *Mohammed's Koran* than the Qur'an itself. The Qur'an itself invites people to have a go at producing their own version and Robinson and McLaughlin's attempt is a spectacular failure

Many of the statements in this book are laughable. For example, the suggestion that "most Muslims are not directly involved in terrorism" (p.14) because they have not understood the Qur'an!

But the most flawed idea about the Qur'an is its fixation on what it understands to be "abrogation", declaring some parts to be cancelled by later revelations.

There are many odd things in this book. One of these is the suggestion that "we do not want to believe that Islam is intrinsically violent" (p. 29).

Clearly the authors, and a segment of society definitely do want to believe this, otherwise they would be attending dialogue events with Muslims and visiting mosques for constructive purposes.

They manage to maintain their thinking or conclusion, as they may hope to convince us, despite the overwhelming

evidence to the contrary from the vast majority of non-violent Muslims.

It makes a lot more sense than the authors' contention that non-violent Muslims are peaceful because they are not "good Muslims".

Their lazy association of "Islamism" with what they say is authentic violent Islam facilitates this misrepresentation.

This leads into the sadly and disturbingly humorous (this is a book of deep contradictions) suggestion that "being a "jihadi" [quotes added] ... is precisely the Islamic equivalent of being a monk".

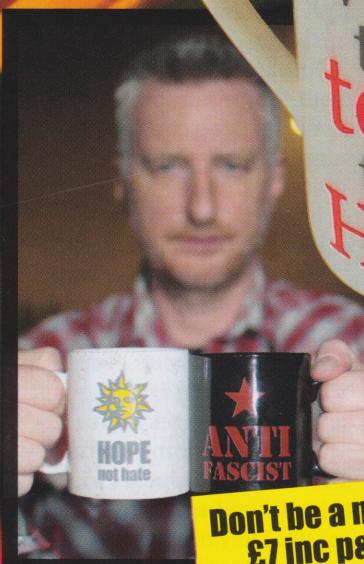
This book gets odder with every page, with this bizarre and confusing statement: "Praising Islam after every Muslim terrorist attack simply encourages more Muslims to become terrorists and ironically appears to bring Islam fresh converts" (p. 30). They offer this as an important truth but, of course, they do not know if either outcome actually happens, nor could they hope to prove it.

A reasonable and informed reader must conclude that, though the authors castigate today's leaders for Doublethink, they are engaged in an even more contorted version of it themselves.

Terrorists do not see Islam as a religion of peace, they are terrorists not advocates of religion. In fact, it's the authors who have the same understanding of Islam as so-called "Islamic terrorists", though they appear not to notice because they do not know the difference between peace and violence.

■ Julian Bond is the former Director of the Christian Muslim Forum and author of *How to read the Qur'an and Jumbled up in Jerusalem* blog series.

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